DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 489 PS 019 579

AUTHOR App, Marie
TITLE Families and Education: An Educator's Resource for Family Involvement.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin State Dept. of Public Instruction, Madison.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 93p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841 (Bulletin No. 91406, $20.00, plus $3.50 shipping).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family School Relationship; Guidelines; Parenting Skills; *Parent Participation; Parents; Parents as Teachers; Resource Materials; Secondary School Teachers; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Family Communication

ABSTRACT

This handbook for educators offers guidance on ways to understand parents, parent-teacher communication, the process of reinforcing classwork at home, ways to support family communication, and resources. Contents offer: (1) practical tips and strategies designed to help educators develop communication skills for use in working with families; (2) suggestions on ways to encourage families to participate in school activities and develop learning activities at home with their children; (3) parents' comments about what they would consider most beneficial for the process of helping their children learn; (4) over 30 items that teachers and administrators can reproduce to help parents learn parenting skills and facilitate children's growth and development; (5) home/school communication assessment for educators and families; and (6) strategies for dealing with sensitive communication issues. Strategies can be used to help families create supportive home environments. Forms included in the handbook may be duplicated and sent home with students, distributed at meetings, handed out to staff, or otherwise disseminated. (RH)

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## An Educator's Resource for Family Involvement

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent

PS

# Families and Education: An Educator's Resource For Family Involvement

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent

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This publication is available from:

Publication Sales
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
Post Office Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841
1-800-243-8782

Bulletin No. 91406

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# Foreword

It's indisputable—when parents show an interest in what their children are doing in school, the children do better in school. We know, too, that parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. And we know that parents and educators working together for the children are an unbeatable combination.

So it is with pleasure that I introduce this resource for educators to use in communicating with the parents and guardians of their students. It is meant to be user friendly and to be used often and adapted as needed. The handbook is in a looseleaf format so that materials may be added as they are identified.

Its format encourages duplication of the materials. Feel free to share the materials in this book with others, and also please let the Department of Public Instruction know how you're using it.

Herbert J. Grover
State Superintendent

# Acknowledgments

The information and ideas in this handbook are the result of the expertise and enthusiasm of a committee of professionals involved in various aspects of home-school collaboration. Their contributions and insights were invaluable in the development of this publication.

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Special thanks for the cover design and illustrations to Marie App. Department of Public Instruction staff to be thanked are the editors, Janet Fishbain, Marie App, and Gigi Durham; consultants Margaret Crawford and Barbara Schuler; graphic artists Dianne Darnutzer, Jill Bremigan and Victoria Rettenmund; typesetters Mindy Coke, Barbara Walz, and Eileen Kohls; proofreader Lisa Isgitt; and all those who contributed to the planning, writing, organizing, and reviewing of the guide.

# Introduction

## *Why This Handbook?*

Research shows that the greater the level of family involvement in education, the higher the student achievement. Bringing families into a student's academic life has a significant effect on scholastic success. Educators must focus attention on positive communication with families.

## *Who Should Use This Handbook?*

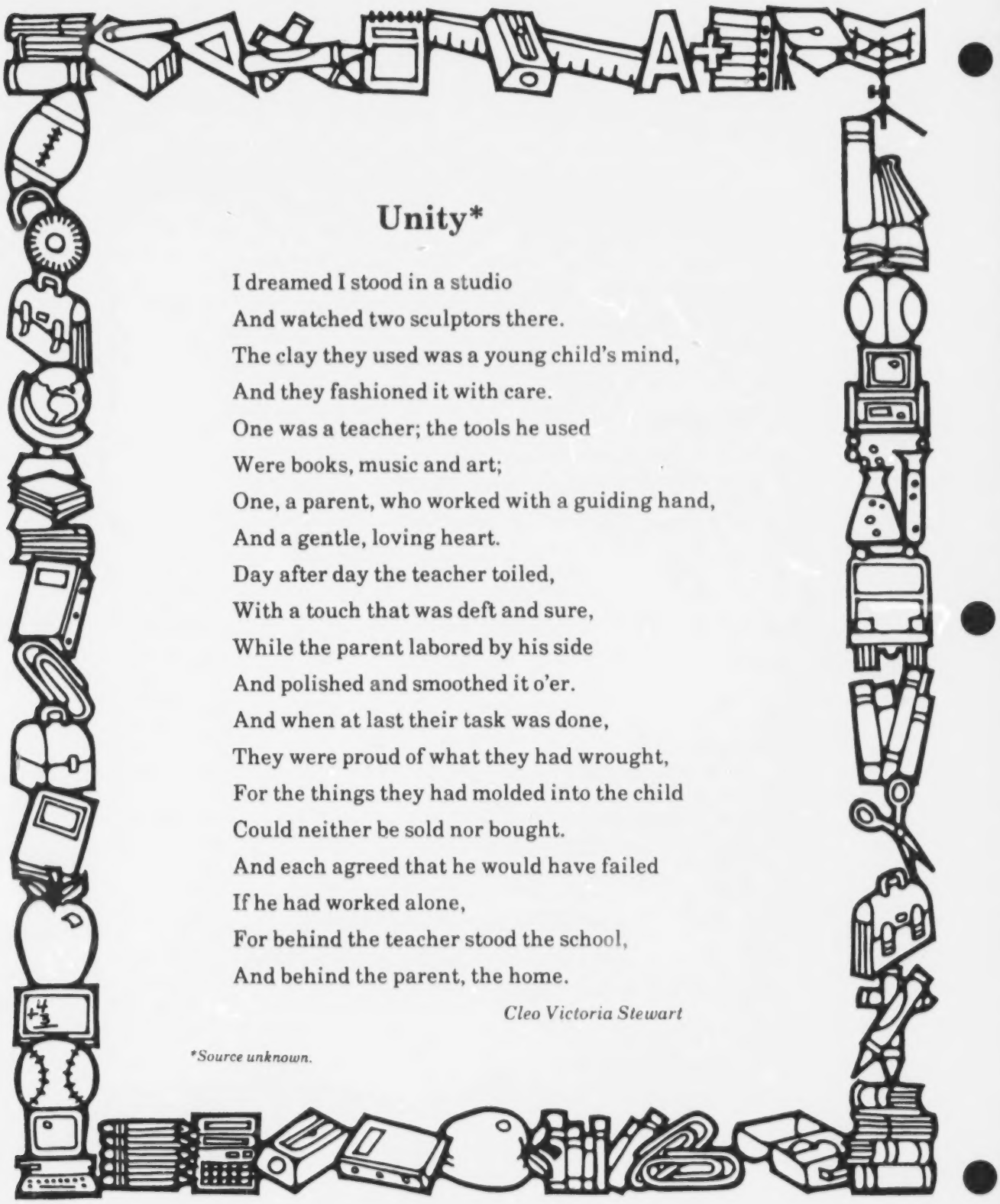
This booklet has been written to help educators communicate with parents. Teachers and administrators are the key to successful home-school communication. They benefit when parents become helpers, supporters, and teachers of children.

## *What Does This Handbook Contain?*

- Practical tips and strategies to help educators develop communication skills to use in working with families.
- Suggestions on how to encourage families to participate in school activities and to develop learning activities at home with their children.
- Parent comments about what they would consider most beneficial to help their children learn.
- Over 30 items, including letters to families, that teachers and administrators can reproduce to assist parents in learning parenting skills and in facilitating their children's growth and development. These forms may be duplicated and sent home with students, distributed at PTA/PTO meetings, handed out to staff, or otherwise disseminated.
- Home/school communication assessments for educators and families.
- Strategies for dealing with sensitive communication issues, so that educators can assist families in creating supportive home environments.

# Understanding Parents

*Unity*
*Creating a Climate for Family Involvement*
*Why Parent Involvement?*
*Teachers and Parents Have Different Perceptions*
*What Parents Want to Know*
*Today's Diverse Family Styles / Cultures*
*When Parents Don't Participate*



## Unity*

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind,
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher; the tools he used
Were books, music and art;
One, a parent, who worked with a guiding hand,
And a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled,
With a touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed that he would have failed
If he had worked alone,
For behind the teacher stood the school,
And behind the parent, the home.

*Cleo Victoria Stewart*

**Source unknown.*

# *Creating a Climate for Family Involvement*

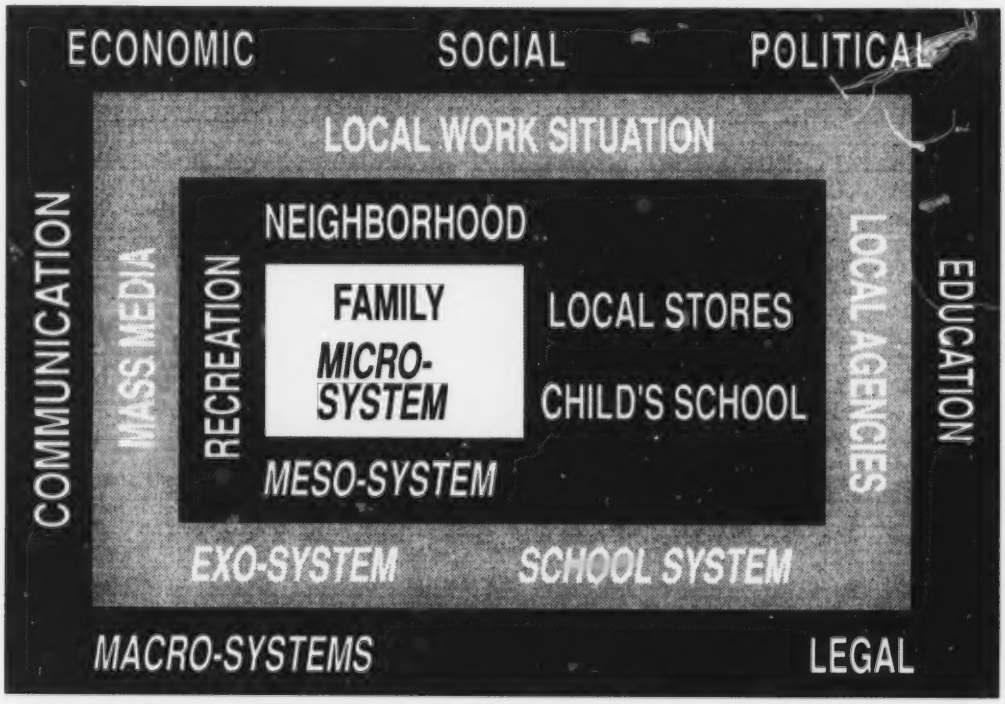
"Wherever a school is wholeheartedly committed to parent participation, successful programs will be found." (Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms, 1986, p. 45.)

Families vary a great deal in the types of expectations they have of the school and in the kinds of needs the school must meet. Communities, administrators, and teachers also have expectations and needs of families. Careful planning and some compromise are required to ensure that the needs of both the family members and the school are met and a climate for family involvement is created within the school.

When considering how to enhance a climate for family involvement within education, it might be helpful to review a systems or a transactional approach. This approach recognizes that no one agency or system operates in isolation but, rather, that it affects and is affected by other systems. If the family is viewed as the smallest system or as a micro-system, it is influenced by every other system impacting on it. In turn, the family can, through the democratic process, impact upon the other systems as well.

The ultimate concern of the family members, educators, and community members is the same—the child and his or her education. The best interests of the child should be considered when any plan for family involvement is implemented.

Gordon (1979) provides a more graphic representation of the systems concept. It is:



Gordon sees the family as a micro-system, surrounded by a meso-system, which includes the neighborhood, local stores, children's schools, and recreation facilities. The meso-system is, in turn, enclosed within an exo-system. The exo-system includes mass media, the local work or job climate, local agencies, and the school system. Surrounding all other systems is the macro-system which includes national policy in areas such as communication, economics, social problems, political climate, and educational systems.

Parental or family involvement in education can be characterized in several different ways. Some authors view participation as a ladder, going from steps of "nonparticipation" to a top rung of citizen control or citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). This type of a structure implies a hierarchy and that citizen power is more desirable than activities on the lower rungs of the ladder. Gordon argues that various types of citizen participation in education ought to be grouped on a wheel (see example in Figure 2) with larger categories functioning as spokes of that wheel. He selected the wheel depiction to suggest equivalence—each spoke is necessary, and at various times, family members may choose to participate in one way or another (i.e., as classroom volunteers, as decision makers, as teachers of their own children, etc.). Gordon cautions that it is important for at least some of the participants to function in each of the roles so the wheel can turn smoothly.

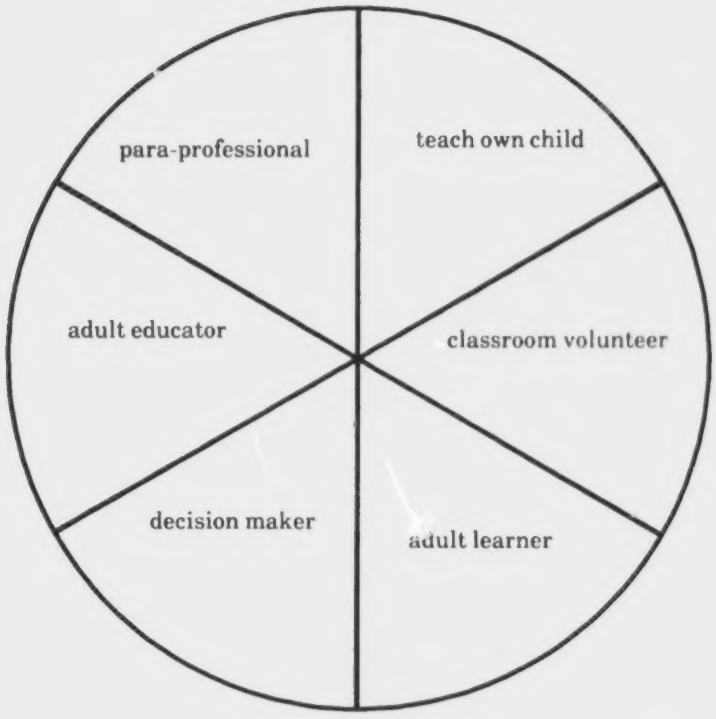



Figure 2

As a first step in creating a climate for family involvement in education, educators might wish to examine attitudes toward family involvement from the perspective of the various systems with which families interact. Questions for educators to ask include the following:

- How do I feel about family members being involved in education?
- Do I have a sense of the amount of family involvement occurring in my school district?
- What seems to be the administrative view of family involvement?
- Do family members seem to be welcomed within the schools?
- Has there been expressed interest in family involvement?
- Are community leaders, business groups, or service clubs supportive of the schools and of citizen involvement in the schools?
- As an educator, how, in the past, have I involved family members in the schools?
- How might I, as an individual educator, involve family members?

Educators will want to gain an understanding of systems theory as they begin to develop plans for involving families in the educational process. The remainder of this resource guide will provide additional information for educators to use during the process of fostering family involvement.

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Gordon, Ira J. "The Effects of Parent Involvement in Schooling." In *Partners: Parents and Schools*. Ed. Ronald S. Brandt. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1979.

Henderson, Anne T., Carl L. Marburger, and Theodora Ooms. *Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working With Parents*. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1986.

Arnstein, Sheri R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35 (July 1969), pp. 216-224.

# *Why Parent Involvement?*

The single most important determinant of a child's success in school, and ultimately throughout life, is not family status, education level, income, or IQ. It is whether that child's parents are involved in his or her education.

This proposition may sound radical, but there is a mounting body of evidence that is difficult to dispute. Study after study shows that when parents are involved, children do better in school and schools improve. Students whose parents stay in touch with the school score higher scholastically than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Programs with a parent-involvement component are more effective than otherwise identical programs without one. Schools that connect to their communities by serving as polling places and neighborhood facilities have higher graduation rates. The effect goes well beyond the short term, and it is especially pronounced for children we consider "at risk."

Knowing this, how can we address the restructuring of our public schools without first considering the critical role that parents play in improved student achievement, the outcome by which our success must ultimately be judged?

Not only should parents—the primary stakeholders in the quality of public schools—be involved in the process of restructuring, the primary goal of the entire endeavor must be to transform the relationship between families and schools from one that is distant and wary to one that is intimate and trusting.

If parents are not an integral part of the entire learning process, children find it difficult to integrate the separate experiences of home and school. If home and school are in conflict, the children tend to fall behind and drop out.

Some of the most successful programs to transform schools through intensive parent involvement have been designed by Yale psychiatrist James Comer. His theory is clear and direct: children learn from people to whom they bond. If the attitudes, behavior, and expectations of the school staff are substantially different from those at home, children often become completely alienated from school by the time they are eight years old.

There are a number of strategies that schools can employ to establish an effective family-school partnership. While they are not difficult or complex, for many schools they will definitely involve restructuring.

- School staff must get to know each child well. It is much more difficult to "write off" students you know and care about. For secondary schools, a teacher-advisory system is recommended where each teacher has responsibility and specific opportunities built into the weekly schedule for close interaction with about 20 students and ongoing communication with their parents.
- The teacher should make at least one personal contact with each student's family every month over the phone, at home, or in the community if a parent is unable or reluctant to come to school.
- Parents should also have at least one opportunity a month to get acquainted with the school. A back-to-school night is great except that it is held only once a year. Other possibilities include social events, such as a family spaghetti dinner; report card days when parents come to school to pick them up; an evening awards assembly to recognize students, teachers, and parents for their contributions to the school; an all-day open house; or a weekend family picnic to celebrate the return of spring. The various elements of the school community, such as the PTA, the faculty, the principal's office, or a local business, can take turns sponsoring the events.
- For parents to share in the life of the school, they must be welcome in the building at all times. This means blanket permission to do such things as have lunch with their kids, visit the classrooms, use the library, or talk to the principal, guidance counselors, and teachers.

Indicators that say, "This school is open to everyone" might include welcome signs in all languages spoken by school families; a parent room equipped with comfortable furniture, a

typewriter, and telephones; and a corner in the library stocked with recommended materials and readings for parents and copies of currently used textbooks.

The school should be a community resource. Schools that provide their communities with a variety of services enjoy a deservedly better reputation. They are also much more likely to have bond issues approved. Community meetings, adult education, local theatrical productions, health screening, candidate nights, and physical fitness classes all are legitimate uses of school facilities, and all contribute to the well-being of the community. The school should also serve as a primary referral point for needed social services.

Some of these recommendations will cost money, but they are strong preventive medicine. Recent evaluations on dropout prevention programs show that they are too little, too late, yet their cost would probably underwrite what we have been discussing. When we consider that the bill to society for a single unproductive, anti-social citizen is upwards of $55,000 a year, we don't really have a choice. By getting parents more involved we can restructure our schools in a way that reconnects them to the communities they are intended to serve.

*Anne Henderson is an associate with the National Committee for Citizens in Education, author of* The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement, *and co-author of* Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working with Parents. *She wrote this commentary for Policy Briefs, Number 9, 1990,* Parent Involvement in School Restructuring, *a publication of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.*

# *Teachers and Parents Have Different Perceptions*

**Most teachers realize how important it is to communicate with parents, yet they often feel frustrated in their efforts to communicate. One reason may be a lack of home-school communication skills. Another reason may be the differences in perception that exist between teachers and parents. Below is a chart compiled by Mendoza and Cegelka of Project P-Pact, San Diego State University.**

**Differences in Perception That Can Interfere With School-Home Communication***

| Professional | Parent |
|---|---|
| **Group** - must focus on the whole class or group. | **Individual** - is concerned with own child's individual progress, needs. |
| **Established Skills** - has knowledge of what child has mastered. | **Emerging Skills** - is concerned with what child is learning. |
| **Present** - is concerned with present development of child. | **History** - has the perspective on how far the child has come. |
| **Futuristic** - looks to what child will be able to do in the future, career potential. | **Present** - is concerned with here-and-now. |
| **Specificity** - is concerned with mastering specific skills. | **Diffused** - tends to see whole child's ongoing development. |
| **Cognitive** - sees child more abstractly, able to distance self from child. | **Emotional** - has emotional involvement with child. |
| **Achieved/chosen profession**- encourages child to make professional career choice. | **Given** - believes this child has been given; parents accept the child as or she he is. |
| **Dominant** - has power position, expertise. | **Submissive** - may feel helpless, uneducated. |
| **Universal** - looks for one best method, way to work with all children. | **Individualized** - wants to have child approached and taught as an individual. |

**Compiled by Mendoza and Cegelka of Project P-Pact, San Diego State University. Published in* Community Education Journal *(April, 1987), p. 12. Adapted and reprinted with permission.*

# *What Parents Want to Know*

**In response to an informal survey, approximately 50 parents from several Wisconsin school districts expressed what they would like to say to teachers and what information they would consider the most beneficial in helping their children learn.**

## Parents Want to Belong

- I want to belong.
- Welcome me to the school; don't shut me out.
- Invite me to school; take the initiative.
- Ask for my input but don't intimidate me.
- Tell me how I can participate in school activities.
- I would like to be a member of an advisory council or parent involvement committee.

## Parents Want Teacher Contact

- I would like my children's teachers to call me.
- Because I work, I need evening teacher conferences.
- Let me know what my children are studying.
- I want to meet the teachers at least once a month.
- Keep communications clear, brief, and simple, not overly technical.

## Parents Want Information

- Tell me the philosophy of the school, the channels of authority, and the general goals of each subject studied.
- Tell me the best time to call the teachers, the names of the staff, and their telephone numbers.
- Send me a weekly or monthly newsletter which lists school events, community resources, and enrichment programs.
- I need to learn strategies I can use with my children when dealing with alcohol and drug prevention, video games, TV programs, peer pressure, and study skills.
- I would appreciate parent education workshops or videos to learn about communicating with teens, how to motivate children to study, social pressures, curfews and family rules, college applications, and helping with homework.

## Parents Want to Help

- Give me ideas on how to complement what my children are learning in school.
- I need ideas for enrichment to supplement my children's classes.
- What can I do to help with homework?
- I need to know what teachers expect at each grade level in emotional, social, and cognitive growth areas.
- If a problem arises with school work, contact me immediately; don't wait for weeks.
- What are your expectations of my children?
- I'd like a parents' attendance day so I can understand my children's classes better.

## Parents Want Teachers to Love and Discipline Their Children

- Do something to make my children feel good about themselves.
- Make rules clear and don't put up with inappropriate student behavior.
- Relax when students are acting normally.
- Remind yourselves that you are an important influence in children's lives.
- If I complain about something, don't "take it out" on my children.
- Avoid stereotyping children.
- Praise students for good efforts.
- Contact me about good news, too, not only about problems.
- Tell me your expectations of my children.
- Care about my children.

# *Today's Diverse Family Styles/Cultures*

**The family structure in America is changing at a faster rate than ever before. This growth in the diversity of family styles strongly influences America's schools. Teachers must be aware of the statistics and characteristics of modern family lifestyles if they are to successfully involve the parents in school activities.**

A host of new words describe today's families: traditional, blended, supporting, extended, multi-generational, migrant, minority, single-parent, divorced, dual-worker, immigrant, refugee, ethnic, special education, and families in which the primary language is not English. If teachers are to encourage involved families, they must be sensitive to families' special needs and identify the most effective channels of communication. Teachers may need to take a few extra steps to get parents involved in school. Below are some general tips, followed by specific suggestions, for reaching diverse families.

## Basic Communication

- Learn about your students to get a clear picture of the different groups of parents.
- Ask the families about their special needs, interests, and concerns. Try to identify the barriers that can keep these families from getting involved in your school. Work with administrators to schedule workshops and meetings on the topics that concern families.
- Be sensitive to families' special needs. Sensitivity workshops involving both families and teachers may be one alternative. Be supportive without being overindulgent.
- Ask families when it would be convenient to contact them. Then send notes or call them. Family members may be more inclined to come to the school or get involved after a personal invitation.
- If asked, offer to meet a group of family members in a home to discuss school concerns.
- Provide opportunities for staff and family to get together socially, such as potluck suppers, sports events, art fairs, music concerts, bazaars, and picnics.
- Have a translator available for those families who don't speak English. Some school materials could be printed both in English and other languages. This allows more communication and serves as a good teaching device.
- Ask parents or parent figures to serve on committees so their concerns are represented. Get their views on educational goals, school closings, and latchkey programs. Involve parents before they feel the need to organize and form special interest groups that could develop adversarial relationships with your school.

## Parents whose Primary Language is not English

In the 1990s, the largest number of immigrants to the United States will be from Asian and Latin American countries. Parents from these cultures, as well as others, may expect the school to do its job without a great deal of dialogue; they might feel out of place and disrespectful if asked to offer suggestions to teachers. Often children may miss school because their families may be involved in social agency visits, trips to medical clinics, or other activities. Their lack of English skills may prevent them from knowing bus schedules, reading road signs, or keeping appointments, especially in large cities.

**Some suggestions for teachers:**

- Remember that it may be impossible, even unnecessary, for you to distinguish between an immigrant family and one which is a first generation American, one whose parents hold student visas, and others.

- Be aware of actions that might reinforce negative stereotypes of minorities and immigrants. Appreciate different language patterns and ethnic diversity.
- Build trust between teachers and parents of all children through focus groups, small discussion groups, and active participation in events.
- Publish newsletters, publications, and displays in languages that all parents are familiar with.
- Get to know opinion leaders in the community, how they make decisions, and how they communicate. Tap into this network.
- Send small tape recorders and messages recorded in the family's language to parents unable to read English. Children can be taught how to operate the recorder so the parent is able to send messages back to the teacher.
- Organize parenting classes, individual or family counseling, or special tutoring programs.
- Be aware that applications for free and reduced price school lunches written in Spanish, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Urdu (Pakistani), and Hmong, are available from the Department of Public Instruction.

## Single Parents

Our nation's divorce rate is 50 percent. Single-parent families comprise 25 percent of all families, and 62 percent of mothers are in the work force. It is predicted that nearly 50 percent of all children born in the 1980s will live in single-parent families at some time. Single parents often have difficulty balancing their duties at work and home. They may not have the support usually found in nuclear families and sometimes are trapped in a low poverty level. The unemployment rate for single mothers is about 40 percent higher than that for married mothers. Teachers who understand the stresses of the single parent can better understand the children in these families.

**Some suggestions for school staff:**

- Provide special training for teachers and counselors to help children of single, unmarried, divorced, or deceased parents. This training should include learning the laws relating to single parents.
- Schedule school conferences in the early morning, evening, or on weekends to accommodate working parents. Provide child care facilities at the school during the meeting. Do not assume that all parents have their own transportation.
- Use "Dear Parent/Guardian" rather than "Dear Parents" on letters sent from the school to home. Be sensitive about Mother's Day and Father's Day activities.
- Student and parent last names may be different. Check the names before contacting a parent by phone or note.
- Children of single parents may acquire considerable decision-making power by default. Develop a list of suggestions that parents can use at home for maintaining discipline and encouraging students to complete homework.
- Avoid the use of the terms "broken home" and "stepparent."

## Blended Families

Many single-parent families are transitional since many parents remarry. The families created from remarriages are called "blended" families. Within the blended families, certain conflicts may occur that may be more intense than those in nuclear families. Three potential conflicts are listed below.

- Children may perceive that favoritism seems to run along kinship lines. They may feel that parents tend to favor their biological children.
- A parent in a blended family may compensate for perceived unfairness, which may result in lax discipline. On the other hand, disciplining a child often may give rise to conflicts which result in a loss of control or even abuse.
- Conflicts may arise when a child who was given considerable freedom from a biological parent now finds himself with a more authoritarian parent, or vice versa.

## Conclusion

We must avoid a distorted perception of changing family styles, lest we see them as somehow deficient or inadequate. Other causes, possibly the real ones, are sometimes overlooked. Emerging family forms are the reality, and we must support them. We must adjust our institutions to meet the needs of all family forms.

# *When Parents Don't Participate*

**For the most part, parents care. They want the best for their children. Teachers should realize that circumstances may prevent parents from getting involved in school.**

## Why Parents Have Difficulty Participating in Education

It is important for teachers to learn the causes of lack of parental interest and participation in school programs. Written or telephone surveys will help determine local reasons, but involvement may be limited because

- parents do not have transportation.
- parents have had negative school experiences in the past.
- parents resent confronting large, impersonal school-system bureaucracies.
- parents have experienced racism, classism, rudeness, or indifference in school buildings.
- parents work many hours and do not have time for meetings, especially if they have children in more than one school.
- parents are embarrassed about their own abilities or lack of them.
- parents lack information about the school activities.
- parents do not understand written English directives.

## Overcoming Barriers

Five barriers to parent involvement were summarized by the Institute for Responsive Education:

- School officials may perceive children from non-middle-class families as troublemakers.
- Parents may be contacted only when their children are in trouble.
- Administrators and teachers sometimes think that poor families are deficient so they concentrate on problems rather than on the strengths of such families.
- School staff tend to believe that the problems of hard-to-reach parents are the fault of the parents, not the school.
- Many poor families have a low assessment of themselves and their abilities to be involved in their children's schooling, yet they want to be involved.

## Take School to the Community

When parents don't come to the school, the school must go the parents. School staff should be encouraged to become active in the community. The National School Public Relations Association offered the following suggestions for administrators and teachers to accomplish school-community contacts:

- Hold informal gatherings with groups of parents where communication can take place in a nonthreatening setting. Start with the positive aspects of the school and be honest about the challenges.
- Encourage principals, superintendent, and board members to volunteer time on a rotating basis to represent the school at a local site or at a community function. People react positively when they know there is someone who wants to meet them and answer their questions.
- Have principals and their staff members call families with good news about their children.
- Invite community leaders of ethnic groups to help communicate with hard-to-reach parents. Develop a network by inviting these leaders to share the concerns of parents and then take steps to address those concerns.

- Provide school representatives who are fluent in the language of ethnic groups to convince non-English-speaking parents of the school's interest in them and their children. Offer spoken English classes for adults in locations near their homes. Offer parenting classes to help them help their children.
- Hold parent-teacher conferences in any local building which has adequate meeting room where parents can come together easily. Try to alternate sites so that parents do not always have to come to the school building. Provide transportation and arrange child care. Also, select times convenient for both working and nonworking adults.
- Ask for help. Instead of offering something, ask for something. Solicit parents to talk to a class about their experiences and careers or to demonstrate special skills.
- Have the school board sponsor a Speak Up breakfast meeting for parents and students and ask them to express their ideas and concerns for the community.
- Well-planned home visits by sensitive personnel are an effective way to get educationally disadvantaged and at-risk students into the mainstream. These visits provide opportunities to share information about the child with the parent or guardian and explain how they can help.

# Parent-Teacher Communication

*Home School Communication Assessments*
*Tips for Teachers on Family Involvement*
*Techniques for Two-Way Communication*
*Teachers Reaching out to Families*
*Communicating by Telephone*
*Open House*
*Parent-Teacher Conferences*
*Organizing Parent Workshops*
*50 Ideas for Parent Involvement*
*Schools That Say "Welcome"*
*Welcome to a New School Year*
*Help Me Know Your Child*
*Getting Ready for a Conference*
*You are Invited*

# *Home-School Communications Assessment 1*

## Communication Channels

**These assessments can be used to stimulate discussion and to develop a profile of a school's communication climate. Check ( √ ) those channels listed at the top that you use to inform parents on the topics listed at the left. This chart will help identify existing communication channels used most frequently or omitted altogether. The pattern of checks in the vertical columns will allow you to analyze your school's communication channels.**

| *Subject of Information* | *Channels of Communication* | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Students | Local Newspaper | School Newsletter | CESA Newsletter, DPI Publications | Friends, Co-workers | Telephone | PTA, Clubs | Parent Conferences | Report Cards | Home Visits |
| Curriculum | | | | | | | | | | |
| Children's Progress, Attendance | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meetings, Programs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Teachers | | | | | | | | | | |
| School Policies | | | | | | | | | | |
| School Finance | | | | | | | | | | |
| Parenting Skills | | | | | | | | | | |
| Helping Children Study | | | | | | | | | | |
| Extra-Curricular Activities | | | | | | | | | | |

What changes would you like to see in your school's communication with parents?

_____

# *Home-School Communications Assessment 2*

## Written Communication

**Mark ( √ ) the appropriate boxes on this chart to indicate the kinds of written communication used in your school. The more checks you can mark under the first seven headings, the more likely it is your school uses adequate written communication methods to reach parents.**

| *Communication Media* | *Characteristics of Communication* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | On Time | Frequent | Easy to Read | Focus on Academic | Encourage Responses | Important Information | Adequate Distribution | No Distribution | Does Not Apply |
| Letters Home | | | | | | | | | |
| Course Requirements | | | | | | | | | |
| Report Cards | | | | | | | | | |
| Success Reports | | | | | | | | | |
| School Newsletters | | | | | | | | | |
| Class Newsletters | | | | | | | | | |
| Progress Reports | | | | | | | | | |
| Parent Surveys | | | | | | | | | |
| Student Handbooks | | | | | | | | | |
| Classroom Policies | | | | | | | | | |
| Meeting Notices | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity Calendars | | | | | | | | | |
| School Policies* | | | | | | | | | |
| School Menus | | | | | | | | | |

** For example, absenteeism, discipline, bus, health codes*

# *Tips for Teachers on Family Involvement*

**An examination of how to involve families may open the door to alternatives. New twists to old ideas or the discovery of a workable idea once overlooked because of its simplicity may evolve. Keep a few basic guidelines in mind when dealing with students' families:**
**Keep it simple.**
**Keep it relevant.**
**Keep it warm and personal.**

## Communicate

If ever one word could describe how to involve families effectively in the education of their children, it is "communicate." All of us have our own styles of communicating. We simply need to use them well. Communication can be accomplished in as many ways as there are teachers. A few suggestions follow:

- **Telephone Calls.** Telephone your students' families, if appropriate, to introduce yourself before you have any need to call about a problem. Ask what time is best to call about a problem. The best offense is a good defense. Be positive and friendly. (See "Communicating By Telephone" in this handbook.)
- **Written Notes.** Write your students' families personal notes, inviting them to visit school or to call you. Notes can also be used to inform parents about classroom events or special activities. Let families know the times you can be contacted or when it is best to visit the school. (See "Letters to Parents" in this handbook.)
- **Informal Records.** Keep an informal record that will remind you of the content of each contact. This information will help you keep track of family information or parent concerns by providing continuity from contact to contact.
- **Family Cards.** Elementary, junior, or senior high school students can fill out their own 3" x 5" family cards with their family members' names and home and work telephone numbers. You can ask the students to add any information they would like you to know, such as interests and hobbies of family members.
- **Classroom Newsletters and Calendars.** Newsletters are generally well received. They can be written by administrators, teachers, parents, volunteers, or students. They can include parenting tips, school activities, recommended television programs; and they can provide a monthly calendar with school events and brief at-home activities listed for each day. Set a goal for how many newsletters or calendars to send home and when: monthly, quarterly, or weekly; or at report card or conference times. These may be coordinated with district or school newsletters.
- **Class Presentations.** While it may not always be possible for family members to attend classroom presentations, invite them anyway. Some, part, or all of the family may be able to attend. Older students can write the invitations. If school conditions and policies permit, provide simple refreshments. If possible, have students make them.
- **Open House.** Holding an open house, either independently or in conjunction with an all-school open house, sets a time for friendly interaction. Welcome parents and other adults warmly and be attentive to each. This will help them feel important and comfortable. Individual recognition helps put even the most uncomfortable person at ease and may encourage further interaction with school personnel.
- **Parent Discussion Groups.** If done in an informal setting, these can generate both good ideas and positive public relations. Discuss materials you are using, what students are doing in class, special student projects, and directions for assignments, if appropriate.

Parents appreciate knowing what is expected of their children. Be specific when discussing expectations. Let parents know their help is appreciated. Explain how they can help, and accept their help when it is offered.

If you are invited, visit with parents in their homes. They may ask for advice about how to help their children with specific skills. If children are learning to print, for example, show the parents how the letters are correctly formed. This will help parents help their children.

Let parents know teachers are people too and are dedicated to their children's success. Meetings with parents should be casual and personal. If meetings are formal, use round tables if you have them; circles usually generate greater exchange of conversation and increase discussion. Name tags may help people feel comfortable.

## Involve Families Indirectly

There are innumerable ways we can involve families indirectly. Schools can survey parents about their needs, concerns, preferred meeting times, and what they would like to know about the school. Then materials or meetings can be planned to meet parents' needs.

Some other ways to involve families include the following:

- **Classroom Library.** Stock your classroom library with books and materials parents can use with their children. Encourage families to use the school library.
- **Family Information.** Know the correct names of family members and the composition of the family.
- **Student Recognition.** Commend and reward students with stickers or certificates for achievements and successes. Send these home with the students. Write positive comments on completed assignments for parents to see.
- **Group Efforts.** Try to coordinate your efforts at involving families with efforts by other groups connected with the school, such as the PTA/PTO. Be familiar with community services so you can serve as a resource for students and their families. Be accessible.

Getting families involved in the education of their children takes time. A teacher who is genuinely interested in involving families will find the time, and the results may be exciting.

*Source: Carol Calloway, School District of Superior.*

# *Techniques for Two-Way Communication*

**Parents learn about school programs, classroom projects, and their children in a variety of ways. Schools should provide several ways to reach parents, using techniques which encourage two-way communication. Check the techniques you use. Circle two techniques you would like to try this year. Add more of your own.**

| | Elementary | Middle | High School |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Send **letters**, notes, post cards, memos, half-and-half letters which ask parents to respond (letters may have to be mailed to high school students' parents). | | | |
| 2. Send schoolwork home once a week in a **folder** with a place provided for parent comments. Require a parent/guardian signature. | | | |
| 3. Develop assignment **calendars** which record students' assignments and invite parents to respond. | | | |
| 4. Send **newsletters** reporting community and school activities; include a mini-**survey** about discipline, homework, conferences, other related information, and publish the results in the next newsletter. Include recommended movies, books, television specials, community cultural activities. | | | |
| 5. Ask parents to identify two or three concerns before coming to the parent-teacher **conferences**. At the conference, listen to parents and jointly develop a plan of action. | | | |
| 6. Send small **tape recorders** home to families whose first language is not English. The children can show these parents how to speak to the recorder and send messages back to the school. | | | |
| 7. Conduct periodic random **telephone** surveys of parents, asking them how well the school is communicating and how well their children are learning. | | | |
| 8. Once a month, randomly select a small group of parents to **meet informally** with the principal and/or a teacher. Listen to their views. Discussion can be open-ended or focused on a specific topic. | | | |
| 9. Involve the **PTA/PTO** and school council in data collection. Representatives from these groups can plan the best activities, find guest speakers, and organize public forums to encourage communication among students, parents, teachers, and community members. | | | |
| 10. Organize **classes** for parents in which they learn about child development and mental health issues, study skills, and student motivation. These classes can be provided through cooperation with county extension services, mental health agencies, human service agencies, and schools. | | | |

# *Teachers Reaching out to Families*

**Teachers are finding that reaching out to families of the 1990s is an increasingly challenging adventure. Students come from various ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds. The following are tips to aid teaching staff when reaching out to parents and students:**

- Successful communication with parents, community, staff persons, and children depends on the teacher's ability to eliminate all preconceived ideas and judgments. It is not appropriate to assume that all single parents are women, that all families worship, that the children have a life style similar to that of the teacher, or anything else.
- For effective communication, teachers should examine their assumptions about people of color. One cannot assume that color affects ability, motivation, religious persuasion or lack of it, interests, goals, or anything else.
- Similarly, teachers should examine their assumptions about economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds and lifestyles. It is unfair to make judgments about students' ability, morality, goals, or motivation based on a teacher's assumptions.
- Positive reinforcement works well. Every parent/guardian wants to hear about the good things; for example, their child completed six math problems perfectly, built a wonderful block house, got an "A" on a Latin test, helped the teacher in class.
- Teachers must be aware that for some children, school is a haven, a safe place. Home may not meet the same standards. Abuse, hunger, or intolerable relationships may prevent successful communication with the home. This does not make the student any less of a person or any less deserving of attention.
- Most parents/guardians are concerned about their children. If a teacher can talk to a parent about short- and long-range goals for the child, the communication is apt to be successful. The goal may be passing Math 101, writing a one-page essay, or becoming eligible for a team. By having a goal that both teacher and parent can work toward, they can openly communicate and work together.
- It is important that a teacher never talk about others (parents or students) during a conference or meeting. A parent has to be able to trust a teacher (or administrator) to maintain confidentiality.
- Parents like to talk about concrete ideas and activities. Therefore, suggesting specific tutors or actual activities which will help the child is a good technique.
- A major part of communication is listening on several levels. One listens for the words spoken and what they mean. One "listens" to body language and what it indicates. And one tries to hear what is not voiced. All of these are important, and the successful communicator will be skilled at all of them.
- Some teachers and some parents are people oriented; others are task oriented. It is a good idea for the teacher to recognize the differences and allow for them in communication. Misunderstanding, mistrust, and negative situations can easily erupt and swell out of proportion if either participant overreacts.
- Both teachers and parents have to be prepared for disagreement. It is usually better to talk about disagreements than to let them fester. It is also important, however, to stress interaction rather than confrontation. Compromise is healthy. A teacher must not punish a child for a disagreement with a parent.
- Teachers should be aware that not all parents respect schools or teachers, nor do they feel comfortable with the education programs. A successful teacher will not overreact, but will work within the system to improve matters. Such attempts will frequently work for the good of the district, the child, and the reputation of the teacher. A steady, sometimes slow progress, often diffuses the efforts of fringe groups who want to impose their beliefs or programs on others. It also may change the attitudes of some constituents who have been hardened by previous, negative encounters.
- A good way to meet and interact with parents and to demonstrate a sincere interest in students is to attend extracurricular events and sport competitions. Not only will a teacher learn more about the students' interests and abilities, but also the teacher will have an opportunity to interact with students and their families in an informal situation.

# *Communicating by Telephone*

**Most often, telephone calls from school to home bring bad news, such as reports of tardiness, incomplete work, or unacceptable playground or bus behavior. Call parents to bring them good news, too. Teachers pleasantly surprise a parent with a call saying a child has overcome a learning or behavioral problem.**

## Laying the Groundwork

A positive telephone program must be a cooperative effort among administrators, staff, and teachers. Here are some suggestions:

- If teachers make at least one positive parent phone call per week, at the end of a single school year each teacher would have made contact with three dozen parents.
- Ask for additional telephone lines if needed.
- It might be possible to take a little time from the regular daily schedule or during teacher preparation time for making calls. Some schools schedule a convenient telephone time for teachers.
- Call in a private area. Teachers should not have to stand at the secretary's desk or ask the principal to leave his or her office in order to use the telephone. Neither should the conversation be overheard.
- Maintain a log of positive calls to help measure success.
- If the budget permits and/or a staff member is willing to be available, advertise one evening a week when parents or students can call to ask questions or discuss problems. Parents who find it difficult to visit school may use this time to call.
- Keep a record of all calls to each parent in order to help yourself "remember" the content of previous conversations.
- Encourage parents to call the teacher, if the circumstances allow this without interrupting school or personal schedules.

## Script Outline

This is an example of a typical conversation.

**Identify yourself.** This is (your name) from (your school).

**Give positive reason for calling.** I am (child's name's) teacher, and I am calling to tell you that (child's name) wrote a wonderful story which will be published in the school newsletter.

**Assert positive feeling about school.** We feel our creative writing seminar would be an excellent experience for (child's name).

**Allow parent ownership.** We are looking forward to meeting you and discussing some things you can do with (student's first name) to encourage (him/her) with this special skill (goal).

**Invite the parent to school.** I'll be at the next PTA meeting (or open house or evening forum) and look forward to meeting you there. The meeting is scheduled at (place, date, time).

**Sell the meeting.** Other staff members who I'd like you to meet will be at the meeting. Other parents whose children are (have been) involved in the program will also be there, so you'll be able to get more information then and discuss any concerns you may have.

**Reinforce the information.** Again, my name is (name), and I hope to meet you soon. If there is anything I can do for you, just call the school and we'll do our best to help you.

**Friendly closing.** Thank you for taking time to talk. Good evening.

# *Open House*

**A general open house for parents early in the school year gives parents a chance to meet their children's teachers, to learn the school's plans and policies, and to hear classroom goals and teacher expectations.**

Begin the open house with a general assembly for all parents and teachers. As parents enter the auditorium or gym, have them fill in name tags and put them on. Encourage teachers (also wearing name tags) to greet parents as they come in. A suggested format for the open house follows:

- Principal welcomes parents and introduces teachers and others, such as guidance counselor, PTA/PTO president, secretary.
- If possible, each person introduced should make a few comments (one or two minutes).
- Principal talks about the goals for the year and special events.
- Principal invites parents to visit their children's classrooms.
- Classrooms open for the next 30 to 45 minutes with teachers presiding in the classrooms.
- Refreshments available either in the classroom or all-purpose type room.

As appropriate, the principal or teacher should answer general questions, such as:

- What are the school rules regarding visiting, discipline, busing, lunches, homework, cars, and testing procedures?
- How is a child's progress evaluated?
- When are children taught in groups other than a self-contained classroom?
- How much homework is given, and how can parents help?
- What level of mathematics will they learn, and how can parents help?
- When will children learn computer skills?
- In what parent councils or groups can parents participate?
- When is the best time to contact each teacher?
- Are there programs for gifted or learning disabled children?
- What is expected in terms of classroom and school behavior?
- What are the names of principals, counselors, bus supervisor, child care coordinators, food service managers, and PTA officers?

Even if your district distributed handbooks that answer the above questions, reinforcing what parents have read will lead to stronger support from the home. The open house is a get-acquainted session for parents and teachers. If teachers have business cards, this is a good time to distribute them. It is a good time for parents to sign up for individual conferences to volunteer to assist with a classroom/school activity.

# *Parent-Teacher Conferences*

**Teachers need the help of parents to do the best possible job of educating children. Through conferences, parents and teachers can offer suggestions to one another which can help children learn. Both can discuss children's progress, behavior, motivation, and reasons behind successes and failures.**

Teachers should schedule conferences with the parents of individual children early in the term to discuss the progress and potential of the child. Some of the topics which may be discussed are

- the child's overall ability to do school work.
- the child's progress in all the subject areas.
- samples of the child's work.
- special abilities or interests the child is showing.
- books and materials used in the classroom.
- social skills exhibited by the child in and out of the classroom.

## Preparing for the Conference

Teachers may contact the parent by telephone or letter to arrange a conference. A good idea is to send a sign-up sheet home with students to give parents a chance to indicate the three best times for conferences. Confirm in writing the time for the conference. (In this handbook are samples of a letter and questions for parents and teachers which may be duplicated and sent to parents before the conference.)

Teachers can improve the parent-teacher relationship by assuming parent cooperation, inviting suggestions, thinking of parents as people who want to help, recognizing individual and cultural differences, respecting children's feelings, and living up to professional expectations. Teachers must not preach, downgrade family situations, overlook cultural differences in families, or use offensive expressions such as "broken home."

The parent-teacher conference should be held in a location which allows private, uninterrupted conversation. Parents and teachers should be seated on the same level, preferably away from the teacher's desk. Arrange for comfortable seating, with good lighting and ventilation. Organize samples of the children's work and test results so they are easily accessible and will complement the conference plan.

Teachers should write down the topics they plan to discuss with the parents. Teachers need to know beforehand what they hope to accomplish, communicate, and suggest, and what specific steps can be recommended for parents to help improve their children's education. Teachers should discuss children's strong points as well as things that need improving.

## During the Conference

Give waiting parents folders of their children's work. It makes waiting easier.

Begin the conference with a friendly general remark unrelated to the child. When speaking about the child, start the conference on a positive note, stressing some good points about the student. Emphasize the child's strengths. Use words all parents will understand; do not use technical educational jargon. Do not present a long list of negative concerns to parents; work on a few negatives at a time.

Ask parents questions to find out about their concerns. Listen carefully so you can separate facts from emotional feelings. Accept comments from parents without showing surprise or disapproval.

Give parents time to ask questions, to interrupt, and to disagree. Relax and try to gain insight into the parents' attitude toward their children, school, and you. Do not argue with parents or impose your opinions on them. If you feel you must change a viewpoint, be as diplomatic as possible.

If a child has a problem, ask the parent to suggest an approach that could be used at home to help the child. If applicable, suggest alternative approaches for joint consideration. This makes the parent a participant in developing

plans and may lead to a discussion that will help the parent adopt a realistic plan. When working on solutions, try to set up a timetable. Ask for the parent's help and help him or her accept responsibility for a share of the child's success or failure.

End the conference by summarizing what has been said. Finish with a friendly remark. Thank the parents for their concern and time. Treat information as confidential. Document conference notes for future reference. Remember that you represent your school district and that the final goal of parent-teacher conferences is to help children.

## Follow-Up

If possible, after the initial parent conference, follow up with a phone call or written note. The note might thank the parent for attending the conference, ask if the parent has begun to follow through with the suggestions made, encourage the parent to discuss the conference with his or her child, and invite the parent to call the teacher or school to check on the child's progress or simply to keep in touch.

If this follow-up is not possible because of the numbers involved, try to contact those parents whom you sensed might have been uneasy or who expressed negative concerns.

# *Organizing Parent Workshops*

**Workshops are excellent ways for schools and parent organizations to inform parents about children's development, skills, abilities, curriculum, and course content. Once a decision has been made about the target audience, planning can focus on how best to address their concerns.**

## Workshop Format

- Consider the interests and needs of the audience.
- Determine the information base before launching into a presentation. How much do most parents already know?
- Determine what equipment, materials, handouts, and questionnaires will be needed. Remember that visuals can break up the monotony of a session.
- Map out the agenda, including registration, presentations, breaks, meals, small group discussions, sharing of comments, summary, and evaluation.
- Choose a time and length that is convenient for the target group. Remember that many parents work during the day and that parents may become restless after a couple of hours.

## Workshop Location

- The location of the workshop should be accessible if it is to be successful. The location should be near public transportation and provide access for the disabled.
- The facility should be large enough to accommodate all planned activities, especially if the participants will divide into groups.
- Find out if the facility has or can provide all necessary equipment. Often items such as chalkboards, microphones, and flip charts can be provided, thus eliminating the need to transport such items.

## Workshop Speakers

Finding good resource people is very important to the success of a workshop. Decide how these speakers fit into the workshop. Do they have information that cannot be gained from other sources? What is their history with the subject area of the workshop? Are they sensitive to the issues? Have they given successful presentations to similar groups?

- Identify the issues that need to be emphasized or conveyed.
- Tell the speaker what messages to be clear about.
- Research community groups, state and national organizations, and professional groups to find which are currently involved in similar activities.
- Contact local teachers, counselors, and school administrators to find out what can be learned from their personal experience.
- Don't overlook your own school's or district's staff, including teachers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists.
- Ask your local speakers' bureau, library, and professional associations for their lists of public speakers.
- Check with county extension staff.

## Publicizing the Workshop

Publicity can make or break the workshop. If people do not know about the workshop, they cannot participate.

- Create a need. If parents feel it is necessary or it will be helpful to participate, attendance will likely be higher. Make each person feel his or her attendance is important.
- Encourage word of mouth communication. Suggest that everyone bring a friend.
- Design flyers, posters, and news releases and decide how and where to distribute the materials.
- Use the local media. Send an announcement of the workshop to local radio and television stations for airing as a public service announcement. Send a news release to the local newspaper. Include the date, place, time, charge (if there is one), purpose of the workshop, and the name and telephone number of a contact person.
- Take advantage of former successes. Highlight those items which made the last workshop or seminar a success.

- Use the expertise of other community groups to publicize the workshop.
- For individual contact, send invitations and notices at least three weeks prior to the workshop. Follow up one week before the event with phone calls or correspondence.

## Conducting the Workshop

- Set up registration tables where participants can sign in upon arrival. This not only helps determine attendance but also provides an excellent record of names and addresses for follow-up.
- Have name tags available for each participant.
- Have workshop packets available for participants, if appropriate. This saves time and allows participants an opportunity to become familiar with the planned activity.
- Allow time for participants to fill out a questionnaire before the workshop begins to find out what they already know; have them complete another one six or eight weeks after the workshop, to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the activity. Feedback is important in planning further workshops.

*Source: National Urban League, Inc., What Students Need to Know, Education Initiative, New York, N.Y.1989. Contact: Stephanie G. Robinson, Ph.D., Director of Education. (212) 310-9000.*

# *50 Ideas for Parent Involvement*

**These ideas could be used at an inservice or workshop on teacher-parent communication. Parent involvement takes planning, and a good program takes time to establish. Parent involvement programs are successful if**

- **they provide information about which parents really care or which they really need.**
- **they are convenient for parents.**
- **they are administered in a supportive climate.**
- **they use a variety of communication methods.**

**Listed below are 50 ideas for parent involvement. Mark those that you**

**(+)tried with success within the last three years**
**(0)tried, but with limited success**
**(√)plan to do this year**
**(x)think will never work in your school**
**(/) have never tried**

**Some of these ideas can be facilitated by teachers; others need an administrator's initiative to be implemented. In small groups teachers can share their successes and offer practical suggestions to those teachers who have experienced limited success. Encourage teachers to analyze these 50 ideas, to suggest ways to make ideas work, or to offer alternative ones.**

1. ____Schedule parent-teacher conferences at the convenience of both parties, either after school or in the evening. Sometimes a visit to the home may be the only way to visit a parent. Teachers may offer this option.

2. ____Distribute an evaluation for parent-teacher conferences. Ask how effective the conference was and what additional kinds of information parents want about school classroom activities, communication, or other concerns.

3. ____Sponsor a parent-child or parent-faculty athletic event, such as a one-mile race, donkey ballgame, basketball game, or tennis tournament.

4. ____Allow families to play together in the school gym at a weekly Family Recreation Night.

5. ____Send home unit goals so parents can help children reach the goals set by the teacher.

6. ____Let younger children take envelopes or folders home on Friday to their parents with the week's work enclosed. Invite two-way communication on the envelope or a preprinted postcard.

7. ____Organize field trips or classroom activities and ask for parent participation.

8. ____Offer computer and family math programs during which parents and students can learn together.

9. ____Invite parents to select a book or chapter or poem to read to their children's class. This emphasizes a lifelong reading commitment.

10. ____Encourage students to adopt pen pals who are business leaders. The letters often provide the impetus for getting busy executives involved in school.

11. ____Invite parents to volunteer to help with after-school activities in which their children show an interest (drama club, music, Girl/Boy Scouts, other).

12. ___Establish a homework hotline. This could be a tape recorded message to call, a computer modem hookup, or a parent network.

13. ___Have a monthly birthday calendar for students and staff posted in the hallway. Have the school food staff make cupcakes or a birthday cake for celebrants. Add new students when they arrive. The calendar could also be distributed in homes or sold as a money-maker.

14. ___Make a bulletin board available for parents to share family photos and other memorabilia.

15. ___Invite children new to the district or school and their parents to a Get-Acquainted Hour the week before school starts.

16. ___Invite new teachers and new parents on a tour of the district. Point out facilities available in the area, places that could be used for field trips, boundaries of attendance area, youth center, and other community sites which may be of interest to the parents.

17. ___Develop a slide presentation or video orienting parents and students to the school.

18. ___Announce a Parent Visitation Day followed by an after-school meeting during which parents can offer constructive suggestions or ask questions.

19. ___Place a "Welcome to Our School" sign and a map at the school entrances.

20. ___Organize a partner system for new students. Students who will make newcomers feel comfortable are good ambassadors; they also build self-esteem if they participate. Call the parent and describe your effort to make the new student feel welcome. Plan activities and follow through to cover at least two weeks.

21. ___Sponsor a talent show which involves students, parents, faculty, and administrators.

22. ___Develop a well-organized volunteer program. Let parents, grandparents, nonparents, and business people know they are needed.

23. ___Invite parents to help with instructional activities for students, such as bike rodeos, book and video swaps, theatre workshops, or art shows.

24. ___Encourage a parents' group to sponsor a health fair at school in which various community agencies bring exhibits and displays.

25. ___Work with the Chamber of Commerce, realtors, or other groups to send a packet of information about the school to new residents in the community and invite them to visit.

26. ___Hold a School-Community Awards Day. Let students, staff, and volunteers nominate recipients from the school and community for various services and excellence. Certificates of appreciation can be given to the nominees and details can be released to the press.

27. ___Request that parents who visit the school complete a survey about their interests, needs, and concerns.

28. ___Obtain parent surveys on key issues, policies, home-school communication, community needs, and interests. Ask a local club to mail the survey and count survey answers.

29. ___Ask students, perhaps as a classroom project, to conduct a survey of parents to evaluate the school and collect ideas for improvement. Distribute survey results to all parents.

30. ___Improve the quality and frequency of the school newsletter. Set up an idea exchange by asking parents to send in ideas. Publish the ideas in future issues. You can also check with your state's National School Public Relations Chapter for help.

31. ___Publish a curriculum calendar or syllabus in your school newsletter or in your local newspaper.

32. ___Ask other local organizations to print parent involvement tips and information about programs in their publications.

33. ___Ask the local media to cover school board meetings, if this is not standard procedure.

34. ___Design an up-to-date logo, perhaps with the help of an art student, so people will immediately recognize letters or notices from your school.

35. ___Set up a speaker's bureau. Include students, parents, community leaders, and school staff who will be willing to talk about the school's programs to interested individuals, groups, and businesses or who are willing to share interests and talents with the students.

36. ___Encourage school and community summer activities workshops and enrichment programs.

37. ___Have a seminar for single parents. Think of ideas about how to become more involved in school. Be prepared to listen to their unique problems and help them find solutions. Have a seminar for two-career families, too.

38. ___Organize rap sessions between the principal or superintendent and the students to promote better communication.

39. ___Conduct a class for parents on family health and nutrition concerns; it could be taught by the school nurse, a registered dietitian, or human service agents.

40. ___Make sure parents of students at risk are aware of resources, tutors, or support services to help them solve their school-related problems.

41. ___Provide research on such things as average hours of sleep per night by grade, number of hours devoted to homework, television viewing habits, and other topics.

42. ___Ask your community agencies to lend their vans or buses to transport parents and senior citizens to school functions.

43. ___Try to get media coverage of special school events.

44. ___Place suggestion boxes in key locations in the school and community. "I Have An Idea" cards near the boxes encourage positive contributions. For this to be effective, someone needs to respond to each suggestion.

45. ___Attract parents to school events by putting their children on the programs. Children can introduce speakers, perform, serve as ushers, be greeters, or have many other duties.

46. ___Plan an evening movie (film or video) night for teenage students, parents, and teachers. Hold a discussion of the movie afterwards.

47. ___Initiate enrichment courses or evening talks on communication, discipline, peer pressure, study habits, careers, or drug and alcohol abuse for junior high school students and their parents.

48. ___Invite a few parents and community leaders for an informal meeting with the principal. They might get an update on school programs or information about staff concerns which may be looming (possible alcohol use among students, antisocial group formation, or other problems which are parent-related).

49. ___Encourage parents to attend athletic events. When their children participate as (band members, athletes, cheerleaders, or in some other capacity), parents usually will attend. Work on getting other parents involved also. Publish an activity calendar in your local newspaper that includes academic as well as athletic events.

50. ___Exude enthusiasm when you talk to parents. Let them see that you really are interested in them and what they are doing.

# *Schools That Say "Welcome"*

**Directions: Think about the experiences you have had working in your school. Evaluate your school's relationship with parents. Read and mark each statement below. Compare and discuss results.**

**++ = Always**
**+ = Almost always**
**√ = Sometimes**
**0 = Needs much improvement**

1. _____ Office staff greets visitors in a friendly, courteous way.
2. _____ Teachers, staff, and students answer the telephone in a friendly, professional way.
3. _____ A welcome sign and school map are displayed near the entrance.
4. _____ There is an area where visitors easily can find information about the school and curriculum.
5. _____ An orientation program is provided for new families in the district.
6. _____ Informal occasions when staff and parents can get to know each other during the school year are provided.
7. _____ The principal offers monthly hours when parents can stop in; regular office hours are available for students.
8. _____ There is a suggestion box where teachers, students, and parents can contribute ideas.
9. _____ Parents can make appointments with the teachers to visit classrooms.
10. _____ The building is used by the community for planned events.
11. _____ Alternative communication methods are used with parents speaking limited English in order for them to understand the curriculum and participate in activities.
12. _____ Information about school rules, parent-teacher conferences, school and classroom policy, and bus and lunch schedules is available to parents/guardians.
13. _____ Assistance is given to parents to help them choose an appropriate educational program for their children.
14. _____ Students are encouraged and praised by staff.
15. _____ Local businesses and associations offer information and enrichment projects to students.
16. _____ A resource center for parents and teachers is available which provides parenting information.
17. _____ There is a bulletin board on which parents can post news and announcements.
18. _____ A computer or other source is available for parents to gain access to information about events and curriculum.
19. _____ Principals and staff are willing to listen to parent/guardian concerns about incorrect student placement and are willing to make adjustments when appropriate.
20. _____ Whenever possible, staff is willing to honor parental requests and class assignment.

# Welcome to a New School Year

**Dear Parent/Guardian:**

Welcome to a new school year.

We all have a big job ahead of us, but working as partners, we know we'll have a successful school year. We hope to make this school an even better place to learn and grow than it was last year. The staff sets goals to help every student make the most of each day of the school year.

Soon we will be letting you know about special conferences and events for parents and students, but we want you to feel comfortable visiting your school. We look forward to working with you and hope you will find the time and opportunity to call, visit, tutor, or share your experiences in our classrooms. Research shows that students are more successful in school when their parents help them at home or get involved in school activities.

Please call and visit often.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| Principal | Telephone |
| _____ | _____ |
| Teacher | Telephone |

# Help Me Know Your Child

**Date** _____

**Dear Parent/Guardian:**

I invite you to share with me the talents, interests, and habits of your child, _____, so that I may be prepared to teach in the best way possible. Please share concerns about your child so we can have a cooperative team approach to education. Call and let me know when you would like to visit our classroom or just to talk about your child. The best time to reach me during the day is from _____ to _____ p.m. at _____ (telephone).

1. My child learns best by _____

   _____.

2. Some things I do at home to help my child learn are _____

   _____.

3. Right now my child's goal/dream is _____

   _____.

4. You will know my child is having problems when _____

   _____.

5. The thing my child likes best about school is _____

   _____.

6. One difficulty my child has at school is _____

   _____.

7. When my child is having difficulty learning something, I find it works best to _____

   _____.

8. Questions I would like to discuss at a parent/teacher conference include _____

   _____.

**Please return this form to** Teacher _____

# Getting Ready for a Conference

**Date** _____

**Dear Parent/Guardian:**

The success of your child is important to both of us. We can gain new awareness of particular needs, strengths, and limitations by sharing our observations. Will you please take the time to meet with me in your child's classroom? I am hoping one of the following dates and times will be convenient for you. Please check the one you prefer.

_____

_____

_____

I have circled some questions for you below. Perhaps we can discuss them when we meet. On the reverse side of this sheet you will find a list of questions parents often wish to discuss with their children's teachers. Please read the list, choose those questions you would like me to answer, and return this form to me by next Monday. Our cooperative effort will make this a productive year for your child.

Sincerely,

_____

## Teacher Questions for Parent/Guardian

1. What does your child like most about school?
2. What would make school more interesting for your child?
3. What activities take up your child's leisure time?
4. What activities do you and your child enjoy doing together?
5. Does your child have a quiet place to study at home and do you monitor study time?
6. How do you reinforce good behavior at home?
7. What TV programs do you and your child enjoy at home?
8. Does your child get along well with his/her peers?
9. How is your child not meeting your expectations?
10. Are there any attitudes you hope your child will change?

## Parent/Guardian Questions For Teachers

1. What is my child's class schedule?
2. Is my child working up to his/her ability?
3. Are children grouped for reading and math? What group is my child in, and how are children selected for each group?
4. What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in major subject areas?
5. Does my child need special help in any subject? If so, how can I help my child at home?
6. What will my child be learning this year in reading? Math? Science?
7. How much time should be spent on homework, and how can I help with homework?
8. How is my child's work evaluated?
9. What standardized tests will my child take this year, and what will the results be used for?
10. What discipline procedures do you use in the classroom?
11. Does my child get along with other children? With you?
12. Does my child respect the rights and property of others?
13. Does my child show any behavior, such as squinting or irritability, that may be signs of a medical or emotional problem?
14. Can you mention other ways I can help my child to reach academic success?
15. What special interest activities are available for my child?

# You Are Invited

**Dear Parent/Guardian:**

You are invited to become a resource person in our school. Please share your special talents and interests with our students. You need not be experienced in teaching or public appearances, just willing to share. You will enhance learning in the classroom, develop positive attitudes toward learning, and promote self-motivation in our students. The list of examples below will give you ideas, and we welcome other suggestions

On the enclosed form, please indicate your willingness to share, and indicate the topic or activity you would feel comfortable with. The form may be returned in person or by mail to any school office. You will be contacted regarding future involvement.

Sincerely,

_____

Some examples of resource activities:

1. Show collections, artifacts, or slides from a trip.
2. Have classes/individuals visit your place of business.
3. Answer correspondence from a student with interests similar to yours.
4. Work with a student/students on a project.
5. Demonstrate a skill, hobby, or art form.
6. Present a short workshop or lecture for groups of students.
7. Conduct small group discussions.
8. Share knowledge of special culture, language.
9. Volunteer to chaperone an event or help supervise an activity.
10. Read to the class.
11. Volunteer to help advise an after-school club.
12. Volunteer to tutor students who need special help.

Name _____ Day Phone_____

Address _____ Night Phone_____

Area of interest or information you would be willing to share: _____

_____

# Reinforcing Classwork at Home

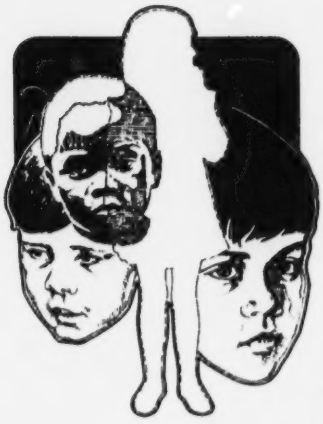
*"Children Learn What They Live"*
*Minimize Family Stress*
*Build Children's Self-Esteem*
*Boost Children's Self-Confidence*
*Positive Discipline*
*Is TV Your Child's Only Activity?*
*Help Teens Establish Values*
*A Good Foundation for Learning*
*Study Skills and Homework*
*Help Children Read*
*Help Children Write*
*Help Children with Social Studies*
*Encourage Children in the Arts*
*Help Children with Mathematics*
*Help Children with Science*
*Weekly Assignment Guide*

## Children Learn What They Live*

If children live with criticism,
They learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility,
They learn to fight.
If children live with ridicule,
They learn to be shy.
If children live with shame,
They learn to feel guilty.
If children live with tolerance,
They learn to be patient.
If children live with encouragement,
They learn with confidence.
If children live with security,
They learn to have faith.
If children live with approval,
They learn to like themselves.
If children live with acceptance and friendship,
They learn to find love in the world.

*Adapted from Dorothy Law Nolte*

**Source unknown. Tense and number have been changed.*



# *Minimize Family Stress*

**Many families live life in the fast lane. Parents and children rush to work, to school, to lessons, to practice, to meetings, to home, and to bed. The stress children experience is overwhelming. The best way to help children with their workload is to reduce unnecessary stress as much as possible. Here are some suggestions.**

- Start the day on a positive note with pleasant words and calm routines. Wake up 15 minutes earlier if that's what it takes to prevent a morning rush.
- Try not to pass your stressful feelings on to your children. Let them talk about their own worries.
- Slow down when spending time with your children.
- Let your children grow and develop at their own pace, according to their own developmental timetables.
- Encourage children to play and do things children do.
- Do not push your children into levels of learning that they are not yet capable of performing.
- Build in some free time every day so your children can choose activities that interest them.
- Provide children with a peaceful home atmosphere, shielded from marital disputes and parental conflicts.
- Reward children for their small and big successes. Let them know you are proud of them for who they are, not who you want them to be.
- Plan special times together as a family, without television, and show a genuine interest in what children say.
- Establish eye contact with your children when you listen to them. Accept and respect their feelings.
- Give children a chance to solve their own problems. Guide them toward wise decision-making by introducing limited choices that match their emotional maturity.
- Correct children's behavior without tearing down their self-confidence. When they misbehave, tell children they are loved but their behavior is unacceptable. Explain why their behavior bothers you.
- Save newspaper reading and paper work until your children are asleep. Spend time reading to your children, playing board games, or planning a family outing with them.
- Do not make quick, snap judgments and criticize children unnecessarily. Try focusing on the positive things children do rather than stressing the negative side.
- Do not come home in a foul mood; remember that children also have bad days in school.
- Do not make a habit of leaving your children at home alone in the evenings and on weekends.

# *Build Children's Self-Esteem*

**Children, especially pre-teens and teens, often have a shaky sense of who they are because they are going through many changes. It is important for children to achieve a positive feeling of self-worth. Parents can help children develop self-esteem if they become their children's ego-builders. Here are some ego-builders to use with your children.**

- Reward children for a job well done with praise, a special privilege, or increased responsibility.
- Emphasize the good things they do, not the bad.
- Avoid comparisons with brothers, sisters, and peers.
- Give compliments often, even if it seems they aren't listening. Make sure compliments are sincere and specific.
- Hug your children often.
- Include them in discussions and really listen to their points of view. Allow them to practice making decisions.
- Define limits and rules clearly and enforce them, but allow leeway within these limits.
- Show children that what they do is important by talking about their interests and attending their activities and games.
- Remind children of their past accomplishments, especially when they are feeling down.
- Focus on their strengths by referring often to their good qualities and accomplishments.
- Respect their right to be themselves and their need for independence.
- Help develop realistic goals when children demand too much of themselves.
- Spend time together and share favorite activities.
- Be a good role model. Let your children see you feeling good about yourself.
- Tell your children they are terrific and that you love them.
- Discuss problems without placing blame or commenting on a child's character. Children are more likely to look for a solution if they don't feel attacked.
- Use phrases that make your children feel skillful:

That was a great idea!
I like the way you did that.
Fantastic!
You must have been practicing.
You're on the right track now.
That must have taken a great deal of thought.

# *Boost Children's Self-Confidence*

**Adults are expected to help their children with many things they've never even heard about before they were parents. One of these important parent jobs is helping children boost their self-confidence.**

## What Is Self-Confidence?

Self-confidence is how people feel about themselves, how much they like who they are. Self-confidence slates people for success or failure; it influences how people live their lives. Children with high self-confidence enjoy a quiet sense of self-respect, self-worth, and security. Self-confident children know they have value and do not feel they need to impress others. They feel adequate, positive, worthwhile, loved, and in control.

It would be easy for parents to say "Everything is fine. Of course we love our children and think they are worthwhile." Unfortunately, there is a big difference between being loved and feeling loved. Many parents love their children; but somehow their children fail to get the message even though they are told, perhaps over and over, that they are loved.

It may help to know that it isn't so much what parents say to their children that influences their feelings about themselves as it is the way parents treat children. Since children value themselves to the degree that they are valued, the way parents feel about their children actually builds (or fails to build) self-confidence and self-worth.

Children use the words, body language, judgments, and attitudes of those around them to put together pictures of themselves. Young children think that their parents are all-knowing and all-powerful, so the way their parents treat them is the way children think they deserve to be treated.

## Signs of Low Self-Confidence

Some children use defenses or cover-ups to hide feelings of inadequacy. The following are a few of the more common cover-ups which may be used by children and may indicate lack of self-confidence:

- **Habitual tattling.** Children "tell on" other children in order to make themselves look better.
- **Bullying.** Children try to get to the top through force.
- **Chattering.** Children talk almost incessantly in order to be noticed.
- **Bossing.** Children try to dominate others.
- **Fighting.** Children pick fights and may even get hurt in order to be noticed.
- **Overeating.** Children overeat as a compensation for approval.
- **Becoming a model child.** Children assume the role of the perfect child—kind, polite, studious, quiet, thoughtful, neat—in order to be assured of a place in their parents' affections. These children keep their normal feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, and jealousy hidden out of fear that parents will stop loving them if these "bad" feelings are shown. These children are successful at covering up their real selves and have no self-confidence.
- **Submission and withdrawal.** Children who are unable to work out defenses, usually children who are more passive by nature, just give up or withdraw when they cannot win the approval of their parents. These children stop trying to win approval. They may turn to daydreaming in their own safe world.

## Parents Can Help Build High Self-Confidence

Parents can help their children develop high self-confidence. The answer is not just in spending lots of time with youngsters, buying them material gifts, or bestowing hugs and kisses. Here are the necessary ingredients to help boost children's self-confidence.

- **Nurturing love.** This love is tender and caring. It means that we value children just because they exist. Children are dear even if they don't always do the right things, don't meet expectations, or don't perform the way parents want. It is a love that does not criticize and demand.
- **Direct Involvement.** Children need some time when their parent's attention is focused only on them. This focused time can be a shared activity or short talk, but it must include the parent's undivided attention. Distractions and distancing make children feel that parents don't care. Youngsters need focused attention most when they are under stress: at the time of a death or illness in the family, arrival of a new baby, divorce, move, or change of school.
- **Trust.** The basis of a child's safety is trust. Parents lay the groundwork for trust by telling small children where they are going and when they will return (rather than sneaking out to avoid children's tears) and then doing what they promised. Parents should avoid making promises they cannot keep.
- **Honesty.** Parents have all sorts of feelings and should not hide them. It takes strength to bring feelings into the open and deal with them. If parents share their feelings, children will learn that they do not have to hide their feelings. Children are confused when parents say one thing but exhibit unspoken clues that say another. (Example: When a parent is feeling cranky and his child asks what's wrong; the parent says, "Nothing.") Parents do not have to explain everything in order to be open with their children, but they would be more honest if they matched actions and words. ("I'm worried about an adult problem and I'd rather not discuss it now.")
- **Praise.** Parents should give helpful praise to children, letting them know that parents appreciate their efforts, work, help, consideration, or creations. Avoid praise that makes a personal judgment. Say "Thank you for vacuuming. The rug looks like new," rather than "You are such a good girl." (Along these same lines, parents should keep their criticism constructive rather than destructive. Say "It hurts Mary's feelings when she is called names," rather than "You're mean.")
- **Empathy.** Parents should watch for signs that show how a child feels. Action and words are important. Parents should try to remember how they felt when they were young and they failed a test, argued with a friend, or didn't make the team. Parents show empathy by truly understanding how a child feels. Parents can show that they understand by remarks such as "It really must have hurt your feelings" or "You seem very disappointed."
- **Reasonable expectations.** Accept children for themselves, not for their degree of performance. Parents must be careful not to put too much pressure on children to do more and better. Encourage children to strive for goals that are important to them and are realistic. Parents should educate themselves on what stages children pass through and what skills they possess at different ages so that they form reasonable expectations of their children. It may help for parents to ask themselves about their children's expectations:

  Why do I have this expectation?
  Where did it come from?
  What's in it for me?
  Is this expectation based on my needs or my child's?
  What purpose does it serve?
  Does it realistically fit this particular child with his/her age, temperament, and background?

# *Positive Discipline*

**Discipline means entirely different things to different families. Discipline is directed at developing individuals who are in control of their own actions and who accept the responsibility of those actions. Parents set the ground rules and expectations, and enforce these rules, in order to help their children develop self-discipline.**

## Suggestions For Developing Positive Discipline

- Model good behavior. Children learn the most by what they observe.
- Have a routine and follow it. Be firm, not loud nor mean.
- Enjoy your children. Spend time with them. Let them know you like them and admire their good qualities. Reward them occasionally.
- Make household rules clear to children. Set rules that are important and reasonable; then be firm in expecting children to comply.
- Avoid unnecessary "no's" by focusing on what children can do instead of what they can't do. Provide positive alternatives, such as, "You may not throw blocks in the house, but you may stack them or make a design."
- Examine whether you are expecting more mature behavior or more control than your children can achieve at their age.
- Offer children choices which minimize power plays between parent and child and develop responsibility and independence in children. When children make choices and accept the consequences of their acts, the learning experience is enhanced.
- Use punishment sparingly. Before punishing, give a warning that the behavior is to stop at once. If it continues, punishment should follow immediately. Remain calm since anger may engender hate feelings in the person being punished.
- Avoid physical punishment. When necessary, hold a child back from something harmful or physically move the child. Do not strike or shake the child. Short periods of isolation or withholding privileged activities can be effective and focus on the behavior rather than on self-concept.
- Be consistent and predictable. Children must see that you mean what you say and that you follow through when you correct them.
- Encourage your children to respect proper authority. Certain rules must be followed. Help your children understand that it is harmful to them and others to constantly argue with adults and peers.
- Allow occasional tantrums, as long as children are not hurting themselves or others. Young children who do not have verbal skills may scream and jump when they are upset. When the tantrum is over, invite the child back into your life by suggesting you do something together.
- Give older children space. Teens may need to go to their room or leave the house until they cool down. Before disciplining, think about the consequences of the disciplinary action. They should be something you can live with, something that's appropriate to your child's age and emotional maturity.
- Angry tones are okay when a parent must convey an urgent meaning, such as suddenly finding a child walking out into a street. It is important that the child receives the message immediately.
- In most cases, a firm tone and serious look will effectively indicate to the child the earnestness of a parent's message.

# *Is TV Your Child's Only Activity?*

**No one has ever agreed on the right amount of TV viewing for children (most say two or three hours per day is too much), but a general assumption is that most children could watch less. Less TV watching might result in children developing more physical, personal, creative, and communications skills.**

## TV Activities

- Make TV program selections together with your children.
- Compare a TV presentation with the original book. Choose and read a book which will appeal to the whole family; then compare the two versions.
- Write and present a commercial to the family. Limit it to 30 seconds. Choose a product that appeals to children.
- Using the same format as a favorite TV quiz program, write a quiz program using facts from science, history, or other student texts.

## Instead of TV

- Play card games (Go Fish, Uno, 500 Rummy, Sheepshead).
- Teach children to play Chinese Checkers, Scrabble Dictionary, S'Math, Scrabble, checkers, or chess.
- Buy or design a new board game.
- Involve everyone in making a family meal.
- Learn to play an inexpensive musical instrument, like the harmonica or penny whistle; or practice another musical instrument.
- Get some waterbase paints and paint a design on a window. Choose a theme and have each member paint a part of the window.
- Take a walk in the country. Pick small, smooth rocks. Paint the rocks and use them to decorate a lawn path or flower pot.
- Talk a walk or a bike ride in a park.
- Play frisbee or fly a kite.
- Read to young children every night before they retire.
- Design a family emblem or logo. Draw or paste together pictures of the things your family likes to do.
- Make a family tree and write in names of known relatives.
- Make a tape recording on which all members of the family talk to Grandma or Grandpa or a relative who lives far away.
- During the family meal, talk about the day's events with a chance for everyone to speak and be heard.
- Start a game of softball, soccer, basketball, or other sports.
- If a tape recorder is available, have children "create" programs, monograms, or presentations and record them. They provide wonderful entertainment now and later, when the children are older.
- Encourage children to use leftover paint to "decorate" the inside wall of a garage. Or use a large piece of cardboard, i.e. an appliance box, that has been folded down. Then hang this mural in the garage.
- Encourage children, along with neighborhood peers, to write and produce a play or comedy routine in the basement or garage. This keeps them busy for weeks. Arrange a "production" time and invite parents and friends. Be sure to save the scripts to give to the children when they are older.
- Save old or vintage clothes, shoes, wigs, hats, old jewelry in an accessible box both for "dress-up" and for costumes.
- Make a list of jobs which need to be done. Allow children (yours and neighborhood children) to form a company to get jobs done. Explain various positions and functions of business to them.

# *Help Teens Establish Values*

**Values are transmitted to the child by the family. Children learn by example; they follow suit. A family's lifestyle, stability, sense of commitment, and relationships may influence a child's values and decision-making mechanism.**

Why are some families able to cope in the face of life's stresses while other families become frustrated or appear to fall apart? Hamilton McCubbin, dean of the School of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences at the UW-Madison, studied 300 Midwestern families and found two types of families stronger and happier than others. He called them "hardy" and "rhythmic" families.

## Hardy Families

- These families were optimistic in the face of difficulties.
- They met challenges head-on and were committed to working through problems.
- They had confidence in each other and in their problem-solving ability.
- They believed they had the power to solve their own problems rather than to be controlled by fate.

## Rhythmic Families

- These families felt it important that they spend time together.
- They had weekly family outings, shared household chores, and ate at least one meal together daily.
- They spent quiet time together in the evenings when they talked or played games together.
- They had organized routines, such as children doing homework and going to bed at the same time each night, or parents and children taking time to pursue a hobby or sport together, or children playing alone or with friends each day.

## Values Are Caught

Values are not only taught, they are caught. The old adage that actions speak louder than words is true when it comes to helping children establish their own system of values. It is hard for a teenager to accept the value of good citizenship if parents never vote or attend a civic meeting. It is hard for teenagers to value honesty if parents boast about cheating on their income taxes. It is hard for children to appreciate their school if they hear their parents complain about school and teachers.

If parents are involved in their school and community, teens will become involved persons. Teens mirror the words and actions of their parents. Parents' involvement in their children's academic life will have an important effect on children's achievement in school.

## Communication Is Important

Communication is a critical element in helping teens develop values. Teens need to hear their parents talk openly about what they do and believe, why they are making certain decisions, and the reasons behind their convictions.

Keep the lines of communication open during a teenager's high school years. Plan new activities to do together such as learning a new sport, taking a class, building something for the house. It is important to spend time with teens, not only to share activities and a growing relationship, but also to create opportunities for discussions.

Here are a few thoughts for parents:

- When your teen talks, listen—don't interrupt.
- Be open minded; don't judge.
- Allow your teen to express emotions.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Show interest in your teen's activities.
- Support your teen's growing independence.
- Ask your teen for his or her thoughts on some of your problems.
- Allow teens to make their own decisions and mistakes.
- Be kind and show respect for your teen.
- Be patient when you can't understand or agree with your teen.
- Remember that there are two lasting gifts parents give their children: roots and wings.

# *A Good Foundation for Learning*

**Every child can succeed in school, but success is different for every child. Success in school is achieved through reaching learning goals as well as communicating and cooperating with other children and adults.**

## Foundation for Children's Success Is the Home

Achievement in school cannot be imposed on children by teachers. It begins in the child-parent relationship with the skills and attitudes taught to the child. Parents are children's first and most important teachers and the parent role model is critical in the learning process. Important skills and attitudes for success in school must be taught by parents before a child enters school.

## Developing Attitudes

- **Security.** A child's greatest asset in school and in life is a sense of self-worth. Parents of successful students provide a constant, secure atmosphere of encouragement and support in which youngsters may test and apply their growing knowledge. Home is a haven of acceptance and love as well as a place of challenge and demand. Give children unconditional love. This develops their self-esteem and gives them a role model for their own behavior as future parents.
- **Limitations.** As children develop, they are constantly testing the limits—physical, social, and intellectual—of where their mastery ends and the mastery of other people or forces must be acknowledged. Parents of successful students teach them to respect limits, yet permit them to risk exploring those limits while seeking to expand their world. The goal of discipline is to have children internalize limits and boundaries set by parents. Discipline is an element in showing love for children.
- **Routine.** Children thrive on orderliness, particularly when it comes to time. Parents of successful youngsters keep fairly regular schedules and inform their children of the elements of the schedules. When plans are changed, children are updated so that they hold clear expectations and experience the satisfaction of having their expectations fulfilled. As children get older, parents should include them in planning so that they can feel responsible for input.

## Early Learning

- Children learn by doing. Give them many opportunities. Let them try new things. Give them simple directions to follow. Let children get involved in activities at home.
- Lead children to think. Instead of telling children everything, ask them questions which will make them think of the solution. Let them count money, measure baking ingredients, separate objects, sort and classify various collections.
- Encourage children to use their senses. Talk with your children about how things feel, smell, taste, look, and sound. Use descriptive words and let children make comparisons, such as "soft as a kitten," "gritty as sand."
- Let children try their own way of doing things. Even if you know an easier way, let children use their ability to solve problems in their own way. Not only will their skills improve, but also their self-confidence and self-esteem will grow.
- Give children time to practice whatever they are learning. Most tasks require much repetition, thinking, and time. Use a tone of voice which will encourage children to try again.
- Enjoy your children. Share their excitement of learning with each new experience. Communicate warmly with them. Express yourself clearly so children will learn by your example to do the same.

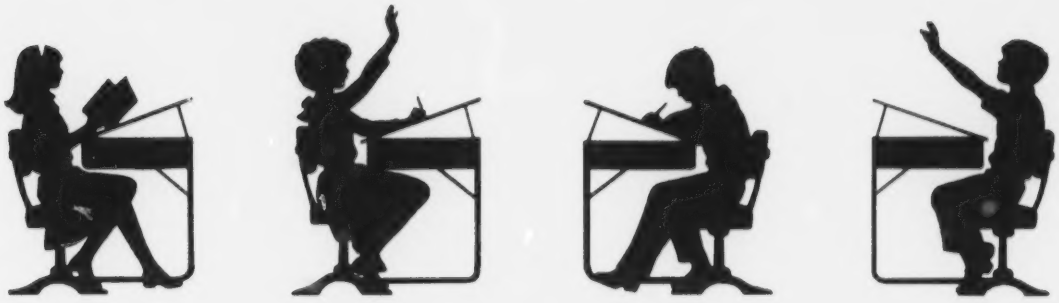
## Basic Skills Children Need

These skills are necessary if children are to learn how to study well in school. Parents must help children develop these skills.

- **How to pay attention.** Before speaking to a child, call his or her name and make sure he or she is looking at you.
- **The desire to listen.** Do not constantly repeat yourself. Tell children once.
- **The ability to express themselves verbally.** If you express yourself clearly, children will learn by your example. Children should feel free to ask questions.
- **The ability to carry on a conversation.** Talk to children and have them talk to you. They will learn to carry on conversations with others.
- **Language skills can develop early.** Play letter games with your children as you take a walk or wait for an appointment: Name three things that start with "b," or, what rhymes with "moo?"
- **Knowledge of time.** Give children a task to complete within a certain time. Let them know they have done well.
- **Understanding the use of numbers.** Parents can teach children to count toys and everyday household objects.
- **Planning a job and following it through.** Children should learn to complete a task they have begun and to help clean up after a job is done.
- **Waiting for something.** Children should learn that it is not always possible to have what they want, and that time and effort go into working for what they want. Success and rewards in school come after hard work and improvement.
- **Getting along with others.** Children learn how to get along with others from parents. Children will imitate parents' reticence, boldness, politeness.

## Fostering Basic Skills

- Allow for choices. Allowing children to make choices builds their sense of independence and self-esteem. Let your child choose between an apple or cereal as a snack or between one method or another of putting away toys.
- Read aloud to your children and, as they grow older, encourage them to read aloud to you. The single most important thing parents can do to help their children become good readers is to read aloud every day.
- Take children on outings to the park, museum, zoo, entertainment center, historical sites, civic events, place of employment, libraries, bookstores, nature trails, and shopping mall. A variety of activities stimulates the mind and creates a storehouse of good memories.
- Teach children how to use books, paper, ruler, scissors, crayons, tape, glue, and drawing tools.
- Encourage memorization, beginning with numbers, colors, and the alphabet. Build upon these to create more challenging recall games.
- Create a safe environment. Childproof the house by keeping household poisons and other hazards out of reach. Protect children from "toxic" TV shows also.
- Prepare children for new events. Information reduces fear of the unknown. If your child is going to the dentist or hospital, for example, talk to your child about what to expect. When you go away, tell children where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Encourage pretending and make-believe games and stories so that children can flex their imagination and creative skills. Answer questions that children ask to encourage their curiosity.
- As children develop, introduce them to more advanced resources for learning—the dictionary, atlas, globe, history book, encyclopedia, and thesaurus.



# *Study Skills and Homework*

**Homework helps children learn. It helps them remember what was taught in class. It allows children to study a topic in depth. Students who excel in academics cite parental encouragement and help as factors that influence their success. Here are some ways that parents can help their children with homework.**

## Environment

- Provide a table or desk and good lighting in the study area.
- Keep noise and distractions in the house to a minimum when children are studying.
- Supply paper, pencils, markers, pens, erasers, dictionary, thesaurus (particularly for children in grades 7 - 12).
- Children study with fewer distractions when music and TV are off, although it is possible for some children to do their homework in front of the TV.

## Attitudes

- Starting when children are young, set aside a "quiet time" each afternoon or evening for reading, letter writing, and games. Creating a regular pattern will help your children get into the homework habit.
- It is natural for students to complain about homework; but if your children continually seem bored by busy-work assignments or homework that seems above their ability level, talk to the teacher about your concerns.
- Follow up on homework assignments by asking to see your children's homework after it has been returned by the teacher.
- Help children accept the fact that their efforts do make a difference and that the hours they spend studying determine success or failure. The next time they bring home test results, written comments, or report cards, discuss the reasons why they did well or poorly. Help them relate their efforts to the result.
- Try to be home and available during homework time so children know you value homework as another part of their education.
- Reward children for improvement. Use praise. Sometimes give them a special treat, trip, family activity, or privilege for special achievement.
- Sign and date your young children's homework, even if the teacher does not request it. Let the teacher know that you are interested.

## Assignments

- Check to see that your children understand assignments. If there is a problem, work through a few examples with them.

- Ask to see your children's homework after it is done. Praise them for good efforts and point out errors to be corrected. Offer explanations to help with corrections if you know the material.
- Contact the teacher if you don't understand the assignment or if your child has a special problem. Do not hesitate to call the teacher!
- Do not do the children's homework for them. Encourage them to do the work.
- Establish a routine time to do homework. Some children study best before school, some as soon as they get home, some right after dinner. These schedules should be flexible enough to allow trade-offs and shifts when necessary.
- If you think your children are getting too much or too little homework, discuss your concerns with the teacher.

## Study Skills

Some activities that parents do with their children lay the groundwork for learning important study skills. Here are some things parents can do with school-age children.

- **Research a topic** which interests your children. With your children watching and helping, show them how to find and use maps, charts, the card catalog, encyclopedias, diagrams, almanacs, cookbooks, automobile and appliance manuals, or glossaries and indexes.
- **Create a graph** or chart and tell children what can be learned from it.
- **Help them organize** a chart or notebook in which they can write assignments, due dates, grades received, and a place where a parent can check assignments.
- **Demonstrate notetaking.** One effective method is to list important ideas on the right hand side of the page; then, in a left hand column, write down key words. By covering the right hand column and looking at the key words, the students can easily and quickly review for tests or presentations. Point out that continual review—looking over the key words every night—will prepare a student for both quizzes and for long-term retention and synthesis of ideas.
- **Help children concentrate** by removing distractions while they are studying, such as TV, gadgets, and magazines. Encourage children to get a drink, sharpen pencils, find paper and eraser, and ask questions before they sit down to study. Help children extend their attention span. If children need practice in concentration, set an alarm clock to ring in 15, 30, or 45–minute intervals until they can concentrate for longer periods of time.
- **Review with your children**. The key to learning is practice and review. The repeated process of trial and error is necessary for academic success. Listen to your children recite multiplication tables, spell words, practice new vocabulary, define difficult science words, or practice Spanish vocabulary.

# *Help Children Read*

**Here are some tips which will encourage children to read and enjoy books.**

- Buy a "how-to" book on the latest craze—jogging, break dancing, hairstyles, or other fad.
- Subscribe to a children's magazine. (Consult your local children's librarian for recommended titles.)
- Use night-time reading as a reward for getting to bed on time.
- Give bookstore gift certificates; then visit the bookstore.
- Show genuine interest in books your child brings home.
- If your child chooses a book from the library that is too difficult to read, read it aloud and let the child talk about the pictures.
- If the child misses three or more words on a page, offer to keep the story flowing by reading every other page, paragraph, or sentence.
- If the book is too easy, have your child read it anyway to build fluency and confidence.
- Read to your child often.
- Sit next to your child with your arm around him or her when reading.
- Provide a variety of reading material: magazines, pocketbooks, comic books, library books, newspapers, and "difficult" books.
- Encourage children to read signs, ads, billboards, cereal boxes, anything.
- Buy educational games that build vocabulary, visual memory, and word recognition.
- Play oral word games while you are driving the car, cooking, waiting in a doctor's office or restaurant. "Can you think of a word that rhymes with 'that'?" "Say a word that starts like 'mother'." "How many fruits can you name?"
- Buy magnet letters for kitchen appliances. Encourage children to build words, then sentences.
- Praise your child for any progress, such as remembering a new word, pronouncing a word correctly, recognizing a difficult word, being attentive, reading with expression.
- Have your children bring their school readers home and listen to them read.
- Periodically interrupt their reading to ask questions which encourage higher-level thinking skills, such as "In what ways are these two boys alike? What might happen next? How would you feel if you were in this situation?"
- Create a reading corner with a special bookshelf and light for children.
- Give a diary, notebook, or special stationery as gifts.
- Have your children read an article to you from the newspaper as you do quiet household chores.
- Encourage your children to read aloud to younger brothers and sisters.
- Be a reader yourself. If your children see you reading for enjoyment, it will seem like a natural part of their lives.

# *Help Children Write*

**Reading and writing skills are closely related. Parents have important roles in guiding children's writing skills. Be involved and active!**

- Create an environment that nurtures the sharing of language and experiences. Talk about the things done together. Read to and with your children frequently.
- Label items that belong to your children, i.e. "Jill's Toy Box," "Ben's Cars."
- Let your children see you writing notes and letters so that they associate writing with real-life functioning. Let children see you revising your writing so they learn that revision is natural.
- Read and accept with enthusiasm what your children write. Avoid being critical. Provide help with spelling, punctuation, and usage.
- Find a quiet, suitable, well-lighted place for children to write. Keep dictionary, pencils, pens, paper, and envelopes handy.
- Encourage developing writers to write frequently. Supply real audiences by asking children to contribute to family communications such as letters, captions for pictures and albums, grocery lists, notes to babysitters and siblings.
- Encourage children to write for information, samples, and free brochures. Read aloud some of their writings.
- Praise children's efforts at writing. Encourage initiative and respect uniqueness. Don't compare children's writing to that of siblings or friends.
- Display children's writing in a special place. Let children know that publication is a part of writing and that parents enjoy what has been shared.
- Look over the writing children bring home from school. Keep the writing in a folder so that they can see progress.
- Find out about the writing and spelling programs in school. Daily writing, small classes, and frequent feedback from teachers are ideal. Ask what you can do at home to complement work in school.
- Volunteer to work in classrooms. High-quality writing programs include individualized assistance which can often be provided by adult helpers under teacher direction.
- Encourage contact with the writing of skilled authors. Writing is learned, in part, by reading. Good literature programs foster effective writing.
- Look for and respond to good student writing that is published in school and local newspapers, magazines, and journals. Encourage participation in and recognition for writing contests and awards.
- Encourage students to solve problems in any area of any kind by "writing through" the steps. Writing the directions for solving a math word problem is one example.
- Stress getting ideas down on paper before thinking about usage or editing.

# *Help Children with Social Studies*

**Here are some tips to help children's study of social studies.**

- Visit museums, industries, newspapers, radio stations, and museums, and discuss what you see there.
- Check the course content of your school's social studies program and encourage your children to participate in research.
- Research your family history. Prepare a family tree. Interview older relatives and tape record their stories.
- Discuss daily news as part of the family dinner conversation.
- Encourage hobbies such as stamp collecting, flags, travel posters, dolls in native costumes, and foreign pictures.
- Take children on trips whenever possible and visit historic sites along the way.
- Encourage children to join school clubs, debate teams, foreign language clubs, and civic activities and projects.
- Attend cultural and ethnic programs and festivals with your children.
- Watch television programs that deal with history or current world events. Talk about how they relate to past events in history.
- Play board games that help children learn about industry, history, money, real estate, government, and geography.
- Encourage children to watch a daily news show.
- Discuss world and national leaders' opinions.

# *Encourage Children in the Arts*

**Arts education includes the study of visual art, theater, music, and dance. Arts education trains students to express their imagination, to be interested in the creations of others, to be expressive and responsive, and to pursue quality. It challenges and extends human experiences and adds to the quality of life for everyone. Mastery of the arts is not necessary for creativity and growth. For some children, expressing ideas and feelings is difficult, and teachers can use art, music, and movement activities to help children express themselves. Creative, expressive activities have no right or wrong answer, so children can be free from the fear of failure.**

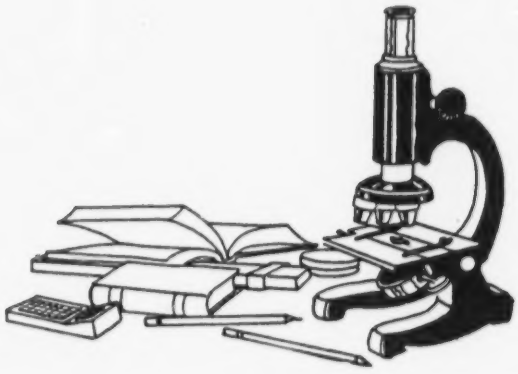
**Many times an idea can be expressed better through an artistic or movement-oriented presentation than a written or verbal explanation. A poem, song, drawing, or dance may be a fitting medium for illustration of an idea. If children cannot perform or create new works of art, they should be taught enough about the arts to be able to appreciate and enjoy the arts as observers. This sheet lists some tips to help parents encourage the arts for their children.**

- Encourage and praise children so they gain self-confidence.
- Provide a variety of materials for children's art projects and an appropriate place for them to work on art. Include materials for various mediums: paints, chalk, clay, paper, beads, metals, plastic, and others.
- Visit art museums where children can see a variety of art styles.
- Watch TV shows with children that focus on art topics.
- Provide opportunities for children to attend live music/dance performances.
- Visit ethnic fairs and cultural performances in the area.
- Encourage children to display art work and perform music/dance/drama for groups, in and out of school. Display and share children's art work in the home.
- Help children understand that developing skills in the arts is a slow and demanding process, and that patience and persistence are important traits for success.
- Visit teachers to find out what cultural arts are addressed, and ask how you can enhance your children's learning.
- Accept and praise children's creations, realizing that even undeveloped scribbles and poorly proportioned drawings represent a necessary and important stage in children's development.
- If your children are interested, enroll them in local arts, crafts, music, dance, and theatre classes.
- Regularly attend your children's concerts and recitals.
- Help children understand and accept the responsibility of being a member of a musical/theatrical organization by ensuring attendance at rehearsals and concerts. Also, monitor practice time.
- Ask children what they feel about certain art expressions without passing judgment on their feelings so they feel free and safe in sharing themselves.
- Remember that the opportunities you give your children to learn about the arts are lifelong gifts.

# *Help Children with Mathematics*

**At a very early age, children are able to use simple mathematical ideas. Their chances of success can be increased by providing activities to develop those ideas and by maintaining a positive attitude toward mathematics. This sheet offers suggestions for various activities you can do with young children.**

- Add and subtract small numbers. Check receipts for items purchased.
- Help children read price tags.
- Set the table for meals and count how many plates, napkins, glasses, knives, spoons, and forks are needed. As children grow, count the number of utensils and multiply by the number of place settings.
- Show children how to measure the ingredients in a recipe of something they enjoy eating. Later, have them reduce the recipe or double or triple it.
- Talk about the different shapes of items such as a circle, square, rectangle, and triangle.
- Note the difference between small and big, tall and short, close and far, right and left, plus and minus, high and low, and up and down.
- After reading a story, ask a child what happened first, second, and last.
- Show the number of cents in a nickel, dime, quarter, half dollar, and dollar. Later show how to make change from a dollar.
- Show how to estimate by guessing the length of a paper, table, room; then measure it with a ruler or yardstick.
- Select five food items from a newspaper ad. Add the cost. How much money would be left from $20?
- Teach your children the days of the week and the months of the year. Let them find important dates on a calendar such as family birthdays, religious holidays, Valentine's Day, Independence Day, and Halloween.
- Help children understand clock time and calendar time.
- Help them read thermometers and scales to measure temperature and weight.
- Talk about simple fractions. Using a catalog, figure the cost of items when they are on sale at one-quarter off.
- Watch a TV program with your children. Ask them to tell how many minutes are used for commercials compared to the number of minutes of program time. Make a bar graph that shows the length of time for each.



# *Help Children with Science*

**Children derive excitement from learning about science. There are basic skills used in science classes from kindergarten through college. When children know how to use these skills, they increase their chances of becoming better science students and problem solvers.**

- Encourage students to raise questions about science material being studied.
- Take family trips to the zoo, science museum, botanical gardens, farm, laboratory, and aquarium. Visit the library to find books or computer programs about science.
- Watch science-related shows on TV.
- Read science-related articles in the newspaper with your children.
- Encourage hobbies in which children collect, sort, catalog, pool, observe, take notes, measure, compute, plant, and make graphs.
- Ask the science teacher often about your children's progress in science class, and ask to see your children's completed homework.
- Do not rush children when they are exploring, testing ideas, building things, calibrating instruments, constructing physical and mathematical models, and asking questions.
- Encourage working cooperatively with others in groups since scientists work mostly in groups and less often as isolated investigators.
- Encourage communication skills since scientists need to have clear expression when explaining new ideas, findings, and evidence.

The following basic skills are used in science classes:

1. **Observing.** Using the five senses to gather information through personal experience.

2. **Communicating.** Reporting observations orally, in written form, or through graphs, charts, models, records, descriptions, and calendars.

3. **Measuring.** Developing a description of properties through length, area, volume, weight, mass, or temperature.

4. **Classifying.** Recognizing patterns and collecting or sorting groups of objects based on common properties.

5. **Making models.** Constructing and using physical and mental representations of objects and ideas to clarify explanations or to show relationships between things or events.

# Weekly Assignment Guide

**Name**_____ **Week**_____

| Subject | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment |
| | Due | Due | Due | Due | Due |
| | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade |
| | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment |
| | Due | Due | Due | Due | Due |
| | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade |
| | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment |
| | Due | Due | Due | Due | Due |
| | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade |
| | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment | Assignment |
| | Due | Due | Due | Due | Due |
| | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed | Completed |
| | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade | Grade |

# Educator Support for Family Communications

*Communication is Crucial*
*Health Care Messages for Young Children*
*Prevent Children's Accidents*
*Help for Latchkey Children*
*How to Communicate When You're Angry*
*Four Illustrations of Parental Communication*
*How Teens Want Parents to Communicate*
*Teens in Your Family? Read This!*
*About Sexuality*
*About Sexual Abuse*
*About Drug and Alcohol Abuse*
*About Career Planning*
*Evaluate Your Involvement*

# *Communication Is Crucial*

Communication within the family on issues ranging from career choices to alcohol and drug abuse is essential to the establishment of a strong and supportive home environment for a school-age child. At every stage of development, children in today's society are challenged with situations that require them to make critically important life decisions, and it is essential that they are provided with accurate information to draw on in formulating these decisions. Educators can give parents valuable input regarding the handling of discussions of sensitive social and personal issues; and by sharing their goals and ideas, parents and educators can reinforce each other's efforts in positive directions.

Children need to be able to make sound, rational decisions. However, decision making is not instinctive—it needs to be learned. Children need to learn to take responsibility for their actions through a rational thinking process, which involves looking at alternatives, anticipating results, selecting the best alternative and then being accountable for that decision. Children need to make decisions based on their family, religious, social, and educational experiences.

Open and straightforward discussion of potential problems is the key to preventing them. A healthy family is one that communicates and listens. Allowing children the opportunity to sort through their emotions and thoughts via an open system of communication in the home gives them some experience in coping with the bewildering array of possible behavior choices in the outside world. Educators' expertise and interest in this aspect of children's development can do much to build on and strengthen the bonds among children, parents, and teachers.

In some cases, parents may not feel comfortable or adequately equipped to address such topics as adolescent sexuality or substance abuse with their children. However, parental attitudes toward these and other issues have a tremendous amount of influence in shaping children's emerging feelings about them and their ability to cope with them. Avoiding sensitive topics often results in children turning to peers for information that is frequently inaccurate and potentially damaging. Educators can ease parents' difficulties in this area by suggesting strategies for opening up lines of communication with their children. This section includes a number of possible strategies, which educators can suggest to parents as guidelines for learning how to communicate effectively about health care, accident prevention, safety precautions for children alone at home, discipline issues, problems with teenagers, sexuality, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and career planning. The strategies in this section are intended only as guidelines. Each family unit is unique and will develop its own distinctive system of communication, but the ideas in this section may provide a springboard for further exploration and dialogue on these issues.

# *Health Care Messages for Young Children*

**Children learn about good health from habits they see practiced in their own homes. They also need to be taught about personal hygiene and habits which foster healthy bodies. Here are some helpful reminders.**

## Early Health Habits

- Brush teeth
- Comb hair
- Wash hands before meals
- Zip jackets and wear hats on cold days
- Wear boots when it rains or snows
- Wash a cut with soap and water
- Tie shoelaces tightly
- Be active, stretch, walk briskly, run
- Eat a variety of foods

If your health reminders are beginning to sound like nagging, ask your children what you remind them to do most often. Then, choose four of these things and write them in large but brief notes. Paste a picture or draw a sketch on your notes. Put the messages where your children will see them: "Please wear your boots. I love you" (near the door); "Please brush your teeth. I love you" (in the bathroom). Tell your children that they can write messages or draw pictures to remind you of things also.

## Immunizations

In recent years, some children have not received the proper immunizations. As a result, diseases nearly forgotten have been appearing again. Here is a schedule of ages and immunizations recommended by the Academy of Pediatrics and/or U.S. Public Health Service.

- 2 months - first DPT and first polio
- 4 months - second DPT and second polio
- 6 months - third DPT
- 15 months - first HIB, first MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- 18 months - fourth DPT, third polio
- 4-6 years (or before school) - fifth DPT, fourth polio, second MMR

In May 1990, revisions to the school immunization rule (HSS 144) stated that a second dose of MMR vaccine be required. Beginning with the 1990-91 school year, students entering kindergarten, 6th and 12th grades will be required to have had two doses of MMR. Check with your doctor if you have any questions.

## Personal Health File

Children like to learn about themselves. Help them record their own personal medical history. Find your children's health records, clinic visits, immunization dates, dental reports, and height and weight information. Tell them about their childhood diseases. Help them draw columns in a notebook and record the health information in the proper time order.

When your children are in middle school, allow them to look up the telephone numbers and make their own appointments with doctors and dentists. Encourage children to ask the doctor to show them how he records and keeps their health information.

# *Prevent Children's Accidents*

**More children die from preventable accidents than from all diseases combined, according to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign. Yet most accidents can be prevented.**

## Toys

More than 100,000 children each year are treated in hospital emergency rooms for accidents involving toys. The most dangerous toys include rocking horses, wagons, scooters, flying discs, balloons, toy chests, tricycles, Big Wheels, toy guns, slingshots, and bows and arrows.

When buying toys, look for sturdy construction and follow age recommendations. Make sure the eyes, nose, and other parts of soft toys are tightly secured so children won't choke on them. Keep all toys with small parts, marbles, and small balls away from children who put things in their mouths, especially those under age three.

Children can choke or suffocate on uninflated balloons or pieces of balloons. Inflate balloons for children and don't allow those under age six to play with balloons without adult supervision.

A toy chest, trunk, footlocker, or blanket chest can strangle an infant if the lid drops on his or her neck. Avoid containers with hinged lids that can fall freely. Remove such lids on old chests or purchase a lid support that will hold the lid open.

By law, new toys for children under eight must be free of sharp glass and metal edges; but watch for older toys which can break, exposing cutting edges. Children should not be allowed to play with lawn darts or other sports equipment with sharp points. Toys with cords and strings can strangle infants and very young children. Never hang toys with strings, cords, loops, or ribbons in cribs or playpens.

Loud noises are also hazardous. Some cap and toy guns can damage hearing.

Children should not fire them closer than one foot away from the ear. They are better used outdoors; they are best not used at all.

Electric toys can shock or burn if misused or improperly constructed or wired. Toys with a heating element are not recommended for children under eight.

## Poisonings

Each year, an estimated 135,000 children under age five—about 1 percent of all young children—will swallow insect sprays, lighter fluid, kerosene, furniture polish, paint, prescription medicine, and other potential poisons.

Don't transfer chemicals such as antifreeze and solvents to milk cartons, soda bottles, or other beverage containers. Store household products such as cleaning fluid, detergent, lye, and soap powders away from food and medicine. Separate medicines and chemicals. Keep them in *locked* areas. Teach children about the poison symbols.

Store medicine out of children's reach and destroy it when it gets old. Don't call it candy. Don't take medicine around kids, because they imitate adults. Never drink from the medicine bottle.

## Cigarette Lighters

Kids are fascinated with disposable lighters. The safety commission plans to require manufacturers to make lighters that are childproof. In the meantime, keep lighters away from kids.

## Bicycles

More than 380,000 children are injured in bike accidents each year. More kids are killed and injured on bikes than on skateboards, roller skates, Big Wheels, and scooters combined.

For children under the age of nine, restrict cycling to sidewalks, paths, and driveways. Make sure brakes and lights work and reflectors are clean. Keep tires properly inflated and replace broken spokes. Most important, buy a helmet that either meets or exceeds the ANSI Z90.4 safety standard and insist that your child wear it. Set an example by wearing one yourself.

## Traffic

Few children under age eight can deal safely with traffic. Therefore, cross streets hundreds of times with children before letting them cross alone. Try to make sure they cross only in clearly marked crosswalks or at intersections that have "walk" signals.

## Swimming

Drowning is the second leading cause of death in the home to children under age five, and each year about 600 swimmers suffer serious injuries from diving accidents.

Never leave children out of eye contact. Don't assume they are safe in the water because they took swimming lessons or are wearing flotation devices. Don't allow children to scream for help in a playful manner because you might ignore a real cry for help.

Don't allow children to dive from the sides or shallow ends of a below-ground pool or from any part of an above-ground pool.

A fence or other barrier at least five feet high should enclose all four sides of a pool. Gates should be self-latching.

## Garage Doors

Since 1982, at least 36 children have died after being trapped under automatic garage doors. Some victims had pushed the door button and then tried to run out of the garage before the door closed.

Keep remote control devices locked in the glove compartment and mount wall buttons above a child's reach. Replace any door that doesn't have an automatic reverse function conforming to the Underwriters Laboratories 325 standard.

*Source: Adapted from article by Jim Ritter,* Chicago Sun Times. *Reprinted with permission.*

# *Help for Latchkey Children*

**Most children are dismissed from school earlier than employees are from work. That means for many families, after-school child care is a problem. Some children become "latchkey" children; they are home alone after school.**

## Discuss Safety Precautions

Children, please,

- Do not display or loan the house key. Parents will give an extra key to a trusted neighbor.
- Try to walk home with friends. If you feel like you are being followed, run to the nearest public place, neighbor, or safe-house.
- Go straight home. Don't delay or go to anybody else's house unless you get permission before leaving school.
- Don't speak with strangers on the way home.
- If you come home and a door is ajar or a window is broken, do not go inside. Go to a neighbor's house and call a parent or the police. Be sure to give your address completely and clearly.
- Telephone your parent or a neighbor as soon as you get home.
- Don't allow anybody in the door unless you have permission beforehand for the person to be inside.
- If you have friends at home, be sure parents know about it and that they agree to house rules. Never allow them to do things in your home that you are forbidden to do, no matter what they say their parents allow.
- Never tell anybody at the door or on the phone that you're home alone. Say your parents are busy and that you'll take a message for them to call back.
- Tell a parent if anyone asks you to keep a secret, offers gifts or money, or asks to take your picture.
- Know how to escape from a fire and how to treat minor cuts, burns, and nosebleeds.
- Know where all the emergency numbers are: police, fire, doctor, parents' work places.

## Agree on Rules

- Agree on a routine, such as homework first, chores second, play third.
- Agree on daily responsibilities: letting a pet outside, cleaning up after a snack, using the telephone.
- Understand the etiquette of phone use and why nuisance calls may be dangerous.
- Know the rules about having friends over.

# *How to Communicate When You're Angry*

**Parents work long hours, answer the needs of all family members, and are often involved with many activities outside the home. In addition to these stresses, sometimes parents are disappointed in their children's behavior. These things may cause parents to lash out in anger at their children.**

## Do Not Use Threats

- "If you do that one more time . . ."
- "Just wait until your dad comes home . . ."
- "This is the last time I'm going to let you . . ."
- "Your brother never gets into trouble at school."
- "How stupid! I thought you knew better."
- "You're so careless; you're driving me crazy."

These statements will let children know you are angry, but they are not communicating the right message to children. These remarks attack the person rather than the behavior. Children who hear these negative statements

- may think a parent is disappointed in them as a person and may wonder if they are still loved.
- may not know exactly what they have done wrong.
- may not know why their behavior bothers a parent.
- may feel they cannot ever please parents and will stop trying.
- may have their self-confidence destroyed.
- may lose their desire to communicate with parents.

## Correcting Behavior

In order to correct children's behavior without ruining their self-confidence, parents must

- describe the behavior that is causing the problem.
- tell how they feel about the behavior.
- explain why the behavior bothers them.

(Examples: "When you are late, I feel very angry because I worry that something might have happened to you." "When you don't wash the dishes, I feel frustrated because it makes it harder for me to cook dinner." "When I found out you lied to me, I felt upset because I want to be able to trust you.")

## Communication Tips

When parents feel angry, and there is a need to communicate with their children, parents should follow these tips:

- Focus full attention on the child. Eliminate distractions by turning off the TV and discourage other children from interrupting.
- Listen, without interrupting, to what the child says even if you disagree.
- Hold your response. Stop and ask yourself, "What is my child really trying to tell me?"
- Restate what you have heard by repeating what the child said; for example, "It sounds as if you wish you were invited to Mark's party" or "I guess you are worried about giving your book report tomorrow."
- Tell the child that you still love him or her, but that his or her behavior is not acceptable. See if together you can arrive at a solution.

*Reprinted with permission from* Supporting Young Adolescents: A Guide to Leading Parent Meetings, *(Granville, OH: Quest International, 1987).*

# Describe

## Describe what you see or describe the problem

Instead of Blaming or Commanding
Describe
You're so irresponsible. You always start the tub and then forget about it. Do you want us to have a flood?
Johnny, the water in the bath tub is getting close to the top.
You haven't taken that dog out all day. You don't deserve to have a pet.
I see Rover pacing up and down near the door.
How many times do I have to tell you to turn off the bathroom light after you use it!
The light's on in the bathroom.
Get off the phone this instant!
Jill, I need to make a phone call now.
I'll be off in one minute.

Reprinted with permission. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*. Negotiation Institute, Inc., 230 Park Avenue, Suite 460, New York, NY 10169. 1980.

# Say It With a Word

*Instead of Talking in Paragraphs* *Reduce the Message to a Word*

I've been asking and asking you kids to get into pajamas and all you've been doing is clowning around. You agreed that before you watch TV you'd be in pajamas and I don't see a sign of anyone doing anything about it!
Kids, PAJAMAS!
Look at you! You're walking out the door without your lunch again. You'd forget your head if it weren't attached to you.
Jamie, your LUNCH.
You promised before we got a dog that you would feed him every day. Now this is the third time I've had to remind you this week and I'm getting sick and tired of it. Mom and I take our turns and it's not fair that we have the whole burden!
Billy, the DOG.

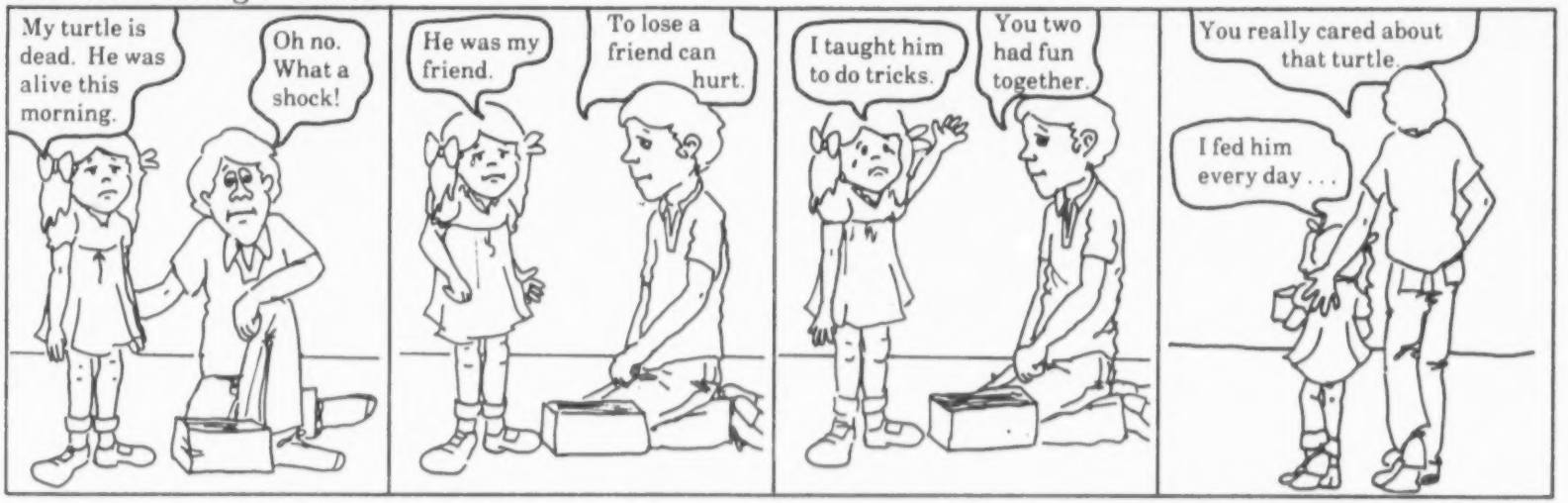
Reprinted with permission. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen.* Negotiation Institute, Inc., 230 Park Avenue, Suite 460, New York, NY 10169. 1980.

# Responding to a Child's Distress

*Instead of Denying the Feelings*

My turtle is dead! He was alive this morning.
Now don't get so upset, honey.
Don't cry. It's only a turtle.
WAH! WAH!
Stop that! I'll buy you another.
Now you're being unreasonable!
I don't want another one!

*Give the Feeling a Name*


My turtle is dead. He was alive this morning.
Oh no. What a shock!
He was my friend.
To lose a friend can hurt.
I taught him to do tricks.
You two had fun together.
You really cared about that turtle.
I fed him every day . . .

Reprinted with permission. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen.* Negotiation Institute, Inc., 230 Park Avenue, Suite 460, New York, NY 10169. 1980.

# Some Alternatives to Punishment

Instead of
ROZEN FOOD
Ooh! You're going to get it when your father gets home!
Point Out a Way to Be Helpful
It would be helpful if you picked out three big lemons for us.
Instead of
You're acting like a wild animal! No TV for you tonight.
Express Strong Disapproval
I don't like what's going on! It's disturbing to shoppers when children run in the aisles!
Instead of
If I catch you running again, you'll get a smack!
MEAT DEPT.
Give a Choice
Billy, no running. Here are your choices: You can walk or you can sit in the cart. You decide.
Instead of
You asked for it!
WHAM!
Take Action (REMOVE OR RESTRAIN)
I see you decided to sit in the cart!

Reprinted with permission. Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen.* Negotiation Institute, Inc., 230 Park Avenue, Suite 460, New York, NY 10169. 1980.

# *How Teens Want Parents to Communicate*

**Ideas for this article were contributed by members of the Talented and Gifted English class at James Madison Memorial High School, Madison. Their words create a clear picture of how they wish their parents would talk with them.**

- Don't pressure us to achieve all the time. We do our best, but we also get tired. Remind us from time to time to slow down, goof off, do something silly. We can't always make the goals you've set for us, because some of them are too far off the ground.
- Be honest with us. Sooner or later we will find out the truth, and it makes us feel dumb if we were lied to. Besides, if we know the truth, we can help instead of becoming part of the problem.
- Tell us you love us—even if we act like we don't want to hear it. A hug or a pat on the back is always a nice bonus.
- Praise us if we do okay. Sometimes it seems like nothing we do is enough.
- Skip the lectures, please. A word or two and a check to see if we understand the message usually does the trick. Most of us know we've made a mistake long before you talk to us about it anyway.
- Don't yell! Nothing makes us want to fight back more than being screamed at.
- When we need help, give it to us—okay? We don't need to be told that we really blew it this time, that you would never have made that sort of mistake, or that our siblings would never have done it. We need help in finding a way out of the mess, not a lecture that we're in trouble. We already know that part.
- Let us know that you'll love us even if we don't live up to your expectations. Let us know that you'll always be there for us, no matter what.
- If we do have a major problem, *help* us solve it, don't solve it for us, or we'll never learn how to function as adults.
- Let us form our own opinions about some things. Chances are they'll be a lot like yours if you've brought us up right.
- If we've got a collective problem, hear us out first before assuming you're right and we're wrong.
- Give us a chance to disagree with you without telling us that we're "talking back." We need to develop that part of our communication system, too.
- If you're angry, mad, sad, or whatever, tell us so we don't say or do the wrong thing. We know how it can be, and the last thing we want to do is make the situation worse.
- Don't bring up the same issue over and over again. Getting told off once is usually enough.
- We love to hear about when we were little, and we like to hear about your teenage years as well. But don't use those stories just to teach us a lesson or make a point about how good we have it. The stories are fun just by themselves.
- Never stop talking to us. You are the only ones we can count on for reassurance and love.

# *Teens in Your Family? Read This!*

**Today's teens feel more pressure and face greater dangers than teens of previous generations. They also need the support of their parents more than ever before. Parents should not always expect to understand teens, but they are expected to give caring support. Here are some helpful tips and considerations.**

- A teen's behavior is sometimes childish, sometimes adult. Don't let it confuse you.
- Most teens don't like physical shows of affection, especially when their friends are around. Use words to let them know you care.
- Tell your teens about the facts of life early even if they say, "I know that."
- Set reasonable curfews and stick to them.
- Teens will not always meet your expectations. They are not perfect; neither are parents.
- Teens need privacy; it's thinking and growing time.
- A teen's allowance should not depend on performance; it should be a dependable thing he or she uses to learn how to manage money.
- Teens express themselves by their clothes. Their choice of clothes may look awkward to you, but they may be giving your teen a sense of individuality and self-confidence.
- Teens need a room, nook, shelf, cabinet, or drawer they can call their own.
- Discipline teens only when reasonable expectations are not met. Be sure you explain clearly, in advance, what you want them to do.
- Encourage open discussion and try not to impose your opinions; show respect for your teenager.
- Remember that teens imitate your words and actions.
- All teens say "Everyone's doing it." Set guidelines that fit into your family's value system.
- Give your teens opportunities to make decisions; allow them a voice in making rules, selecting classes, and learning activities.
- Avoid power struggles; remember that too much control causes rebellion.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Don't try too hard to communicate. Listen and be open minded.
- Talk calmly instead of yelling or preaching.
- If you are angry about something else, cool down before talking to your teen.
- Teens need to see parents admit their mistakes and apologize for certain actions.
- Use neutral situations like a TV show or news article to bring up and discuss topics such as sex or alcohol and other drug use.
- Daily conversation about school between parents and children is one of the things strongly associated with students' high grades.
- Give teens opportunities to interact with peers to help them acquire a sense of belonging. Teens need to feel part of a larger group.
- To help teens learn responsibility, give guidance, set clear limits for behavior, and provide enough structure to insure that the efforts of teens are met with success rather than failure.
- Give teens opportunities to have others depend on them; teens learn accountability when youngsters, the elderly, or tutored students need them.

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## *About Sexuality*

**Parents play a major role in the sexuality education of their children—even if they never speak a word to them about sex. Early nurturing helps children feel good about themselves, their bodies, and being touched. Parents provide daily models for female and male opinions, behaviors, and relationships.**

### Talk about Sexuality

Although a great deal of this learning takes place without words, it is still essential for parents to *talk* about sexuality with both sons and daughters. Unfortunately, talking about this subject is not always easy; most parents are uncertain about what to say and when to say it. Parents are not alone if they feel unsure.

In spite of this uneasiness, ongoing parent/child communication about sexuality *is* important. Some research suggests that intercourse starts later and there is a lower rate of teenage pregnancy among young people whose parents have talked openly and honestly with them about sexuality. Inadequate information behind sexual decisions is frequently a contributing factor with negative consequences. Research also indicates that most children *prefer* to get sexuality information from parents —although most of them don't. When young people don't get this information from parents, they inevitably seek it from other sources.

### Talk about Values

It is also important for parents to explain their own values and beliefs about sexuality to their children. As children become preteens, they are greatly influenced by the values of friends whose beliefs may differ from those of parents. When this happens, parents who can listen respectfully and discuss these differences patiently and without harsh criticism can help young people develop their own values, an essential aspect of growing up. With open communication, many parents find children's values shift to be more like their own by early adulthood.

In short, it's a good idea for parents to talk with their children—beginning in the preschool years—about sexuality. Now is the time to make a resolution to try. It's never too late to begin. Although it is not possible to make up for lost time in one "big talk," parents *can* open lines of communication now and help keep them open.

### Some Helpful Hints for Parents

- Know that it's okay to feel a little uneasy. Just don't let it stop you from talking. You might even share your discomfort by saying something like "This isn't easy for me. My parents didn't talk with me about sex, but I think it's too important *not* to talk about." Once shared, your uneasiness can actually be a common bond that makes ongoing communication easier.
- Recall your own early curiosity and questions. Decide whether and how you might want to make the experience of learning about sexuality different for your child. Such recollections may help you understand your child better and could be a starting point for discussion.

- Be positive in discussing sexuality. Avoid total reliance on fear messages. Remember that you want your child to become an adult who takes pleasure in her or his sexuality as well as one who makes responsible sexual decisions.
- Be respectful of your daughter or son. Be as respectful of a young person's personal viewpoints as you want her or him to be of yours—whether you agree or not. An explanation of *why* you disagree is more helpful than put-downs or harsh criticism. Remember that your child considers a variety of differing values in the *process* of developing her/his own.
- Gather the information you need. The more confident you are about your knowledge, the easier it is to talk. Your public library, local school, religious institution, doctor's office, or family planning clinic are all possible sources of information.
- Answer questions simply and directly when they are asked. If questions are ignored or put off, your child may not ask again. Never laugh at a child's questions. If the question deals with opinions, you might talk about how and why you formed an opinion and ask for your daughter's or son's point of view. Long-winded sermonizing can cut off future communication.
- Listen carefully to make sure you know what is being asked. Be alert to the possibility of hidden feelings, but don't jump to conclusions about why the question is being asked. For example, if your preteen asks about intercourse, don't assume she or he is actually engaging in this activity.
- After answering a question, ask your child if you've answered it. If not, clarify the question and try again. If so, ask if there are other questions.
- Understand that it's okay not to know all the answers. No one knows all the answers about sexuality, so don't be afraid to admit it when you don't. Instead, you might offer to look up the answer with your daughter or son. The goal is to be "askable" and encourage further communication—not necessarily to be an expert—so *how* you listen and respond is more important than having the right answer.
- Initiate discussions even if no questions are asked. Assume curiosity and interest and take responsibility for bringing up the subject. Be alert for such "teachable moments" as pregnant friends or relatives, animal reproduction, TV programs, and newspaper articles. Even offensive incidents can provide a chance to say that you disapprove and to explain why.
- Be informed about your school's Human Growth and Development program. These programs can complement your efforts and provide excellent opportunities for parent/child discussion.
- Realize that talking with young people about sexuality is not a one-time project. Learning and mutual trust take time; they evolve slowly from ongoing two-way communication.
- Consider other sources of sexuality information. No matter how good the relationship between parent and child, sometimes—for a variety of reasons—talking about sexuality just does not work. So it's important to provide other sources of information—pamphlets, books, videos, and other trusted adults such as family members and friends. As a parent, you are an important sexuality educator for your child, but you don't have to do it alone.

For further information, contact the Wisconsin Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Services Board, 16 North Carroll Street, Suite 720, Madison, WI 53703.

*Source: Bonnie Trudell, Ph.D., Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

## *About Sexual Abuse*

**Perhaps the most critical child sexual prevention strategy for parents is good communication with their children. This is challenging to every parent, especially for working parents and parents of adolescents. Here are some suggestions:**

- Talk to your child every day and take time to really listen and observe. Learn as many details as you can about your child's activities and feelings. Encourage him or her to share concerns and problems with you.
- Explain that your child's body belongs to him or her alone, and that no one else has the right to touch it without permission.
- Tell your child that some adults may try to hurt children and make them do things they don't feel comfortable doing. Often, these grownups call what they're doing a secret between themselves and a child.
- Explain that some adults may even threaten children by saying that their parents may be hurt or killed if they ever share the secret. Emphasize that an adult who does something like this is doing something wrong.
- Tell children that adults whom they know, trust, and love or someone who might be in a position of authority (like a babysitter, relative, teacher, or even police officer), might try to do something like this. Try not to scare your children—emphasize that the vast majority of grown-ups never do this, and that most adults are deeply concerned about protecting children from harm.

## Choosing a Child Care Center

Although the vast majority of this nation's preschools and child care centers are perfectly safe places, recent reports of child sexual abuse in these settings are a source of great concern to parents.

- Check to make sure the child care center is reputable. State or local licensing agencies, child care information, and referral services may help.
- Find out as much as you can about the teachers and caregivers. Talk with other parents who have used the center.
- Learn about the center's hiring policies and practices. Ask how the organization recruits and selects staff. Find out whether they examine references and previous employment history.
- Learn whether the center welcomes and supports parent participation.
- Ensure that you have the right to drop in and visit the program at any time.
- Make sure you are informed about every planned outing. Never give the organization blanket permission to take your child off the premises.

- Prohibit in writing the release of your child to anyone without your explicit authorization. Make sure the program knows who will pick up your child on any given day.

## If Your Child Complains

If you think your child has been abused, believe the child. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. Commend the child for telling you and convey your support for the child. A child's greatest fear is that he or she is at fault and responsible for the incident. Alleviating this self-blame is of paramount importance. Here are other tips:

- Temper your own reaction, recognizing that your perspective and acceptance are critical signals to the child. Your greatest challenge may be not to convey your own horror about the abuse.
- Do not go to the suspected child care center to talk about your concern. Instead, report the suspected molestation to a social services agency or the police.
- Find a specialized agency that evaluates sexual abuse victims—a hospital or a child welfare agency or a community health therapy group.
- Search for a physician who has the experience and training to detect and recognize sexual abuse if you seek a medical examination for your child. Community sexual abuse treatment programs, children's hospitals, and medical societies may be sources for referrals.
- Talk with other parents to ascertain whether there are unusual behaviors or physical symptoms in their children.
- Remember that taking action is critical, because if nothing is done, other children will continue to be at risk. Child sexual abuse is a community concern.
- Finally, do not blame yourself. Sexual abuse is a fact in our society. Many individuals who molest children find work through employment and community activities which give them access to children. The vast majority of abuse occurs in situations where the child knows and trusts the adult. A community and national consciousness is needed before we can stamp out sexual molestation in our society.

*Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Development Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families.*

# *About Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

**Much attention is given to parental influence in the use of alcohol and other drugs. A student's decision to try alcohol and other drugs is influenced primarily by early family environment. Parents are the most important influence in their children's lives. Parents' words and actions carry great power with children.**

## Factors that May Predict Substance Abuse

Here are some factors that may predict alcohol/drug abuse:

- Family history of alcoholism
- Family management problems, especially families with much parental discord and violence
- Parental alcohol/drug use and attitudes toward use
- Lack of social bonding to society
- Exposure to ads that encourage drinking
- Ways in which parents handle alcohol during celebrations and holidays
- Siblings who use drugs
- Sexual abuse
- Chronic depression
- Peer groups involved in drugs and alcohol
- Poor self concept

## Is My Child Using Drugs?

There are certain behaviors that can warn parents that their child may be involved with drugs:

- Sudden decline in attendance or performance at work or school
- Impaired relationship with family or friends
- Ignoring curfews
- Unusual temper flare-ups or abrupt change in mood
- Increased borrowing of money from parents or friends
- Stealing from home, school, or employer
- Heightened secrecy about actions and possessions
- Having alcohol or drug paraphernalia
- Associating with a new group of friends, especially those who use drugs
- Is sick more often or skips school
- Eats more or less than usual
- Has trouble sleeping

## What Parents Can Do

- Be a good role model.
- Be a family that encourages and loves children.
- Create positive family activities.
- Discuss the issue of substance use and abuse when children are young.
- Be loving and responsive.
- Increase your own self-esteem.
- Admit when you don't know something and offer to find the answer together.

- Be willing to speak up about advertising which glorifies drinking.
- Give children responsibilities from an early age.
- Help children develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- Try to understand things from your children's perspective.
- Let other positive, life-giving people such as relatives, teachers, counselors, and others with positive values, help you.
- Develop a sense of humor and have fun with your children.
- Give assistance to school and community projects that sponsor substance-free activities.
- Check on parties: Call to see if parent is home/knows about party.
- If your child has a party, be there. Be visible.
- Help schools develop programs and policies regarding alcohol and other drug use/abuse.

## Available Resources

The following articles and booklets are available from Wisconsin Clearinghouse, Dept. FH, P.O. Box 1468, Madison, WI 53701.

- *Helping Your Preteen Say "No": A Parent's Aid.*
- *I Need to Be Me: The Emergence of Self.*
- *Like Parent, Like Child.*
- *Who's Sending Your Signals?*
- *Young Children and Drugs: What Parents Can Do.*
- *Who's Raising Your Family? A Workbook for Parents and Children.*
- In addition, *What Do You Say — A Parent's Guide to Talking With Children About Drugs and Alcohol*, is available through Michael Furstenberg, Human Relations Service, Wellesley, MA 02181.

# About Career Planning

**One of the best ways to prepare children for a satisfying adulthood is to help them prepare for future work. Schools are becoming more involved in career development, and many school personnel are deeply committed to the students they serve. But the fact remains, parents care more about their children than anyone! Parents have the most impact on their children's future success. These tips suggest ways to guide children's career development.**

- Make sure your students have as well-rounded a background—academically and socially—as possible.
- Encourage your children to examine familiar and new careers, not only those available in your city or family tradition.
- Let your children make a list of occupations they find interesting and find out what kind of education or training is required for these occupations.
- To make effective choices about their future careers, children need to make decisions about other things on their own now.
- Ask your children to write down all the positive and negative things about a career they are currently considering.
- Ask your children to talk to the school counselor or a favorite teacher for a better understanding of classes they choose in high school. Talk about how each can affect their future.
- Notice the personal interests of your children and encourage hobbies with related magazine subscriptions, posters, hobby kit materials, and museum trips.
- Notice your children's favorite subjects. Link these subjects to occupations and take your children to visit someone involved in that occupation.
- Provide your children with information about assertiveness, respect for themselves and others, cooperation, conflict resolution, and acceptance of their feelings and opinions as valid.
- Talk to your children about the ways they are privileged and disadvantaged in our society. Help them become aware of the human worth and legal rights of people who don't have the advantages they enjoy. In discussing ways they are disadvantaged, affirm their wholeness and worthiness.
- Get more ideas about career development from your school counselor.
- Be sure your children understand the prerequisites for high school graduation and college or vocational education. These can be found in *Preparing for Life and Work, A Guide to High School Course Selection* from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
- If your children are disabled and/or gifted and talented, work closely with teachers to meet their special abilities.

# Evaluate Your Involvement

**Are you involved in the education of your children? Read the items listed below and check those that apply to you. If you can check at least 25 of these items, you are probably an involved parent; 24-20, moderately involved; 19 or less, not involved enough.**

- ☐ I let my children know daily that I love and respect them.
- ☐ I read to my children.
- ☐ I talk to my children's teachers.
- ☐ I attend parent-teacher conferences.
- ☐ I attend parent-teacher organization meetings.
- ☐ I attend school board meetings.
- ☐ I visit my children's classrooms.
- ☐ I check my children's homework.
- ☐ I know what my children are studying.
- ☐ I attend school activities in which my children are involved.
- ☐ I take my children to the library or museum.
- ☐ I give my children a quiet place to study and uninterrupted study time each day.
- ☐ I encourage the interests and hobbies of my children.
- ☐ I allow my children to teach me things they learn.
- ☐ I arrange for my children to display or demonstrate things they have learned.
- ☐ I encourage them to write (notes, letters, diary, forms).
- ☐ I give my children a chance to read to family members.
- ☐ I discuss with my children what we watch on television.
- ☐ I talk about why some movies are better than others.
- ☐ I make sure my children are offered well-balanced meals.
- ☐ I discuss house rules with my children.
- ☐ I teach basic safety rules to my children.
- ☐ I praise good efforts of my children.
- ☐ I hug my children.
- ☐ I help my children accept responsibility in the home and teach why this is important.
- ☐ I meet my children's friends.
- ☐ I am not afraid to discipline my children when it is necessary, but I temper it with love.
- ☐ I check to see if parents are home when my children are invited to parties.
- ☐ I set definite, reasonable curfews.
- ☐ I encourage my children to help prepare meals, read recipes, and measure ingredients.
- ☐ I give my children freedom to make decisions which are age-appropriate.
- ☐ I teach my children to respect and accept others, no matter what their culture or race.

# Selected Resources

# *Selected Resources*

## Books, Articles, and Papers


Barquet, Norma. "Parent Involvement in American Education: A National Origin Perspective." *Equity Coalition For Race, Gender, and National Origin* 1.2 (Spring 1990), pp. 4-6.

"Children, Racism, and the Media." *Scientists' Institute for Public Information SIPIscope*, 16.3 (1988), pp. 18-20.

Chrispeels, Janet K. "The Family As An Educational Resource." *Community Education Journal* (April 1987), pp. 10-17.

Cryer, Roger E. "The Language Barrier and Family Stress." *Family Resource Coalition Report* 8.2 (1989), p. 8.

Eastman, Gay. *Family Involvement in Education*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Bulletin No. 8926, 1989.

*Focus on Parents: Strategies for Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families in Education*. Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education, Office of Community Education, 1989.

Henderson, Anne T. *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement—An Annotated Bibliography*. Ann Arbor, MI: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987.

Epstein, Joyce L. "Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships in Inner-City Schools." *Family Resource Coalition Report* 8.2 (1989), p.7.

McKinney, Kay, ed. What Works: *Research About Teaching and Learning*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC.: U.S. Department of Education Information Office, 1987.

*Parenting Skills: Bringing Out the Best in Your Child*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1989.

Rich, Dorothy. *Schools and Families: Issues and Actions*. Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1987.

U.S. Department of Health and Social Services. *Single Parent Families*. DHSS Pub. No. 79-30247. Washington, D.C., 1981.


## Brochures and Guides


*The Family Connection: A Guide To Leading Training Meetings*. Granville, OH: Quest International, 1990.

*Families In Education* (Theme packets for educators and parents with information on parent and community involvement in education). Madison, WI: Department of Public Instruction, 1987-1991.

*Family Times: An Activity Guide*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madision Department of Agricultural Journalism, 1987.

*Good Teaching and Learning Habits*. Marshfield, WI: Lincoln Elementary School, 1989.

*Help Your Child Do Better In School*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Education Research and Improvement, 1985.

*Helping Your Children Discover*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Bulletin No. 9534, 1990.

*Helping Your Child Learn*. Arlington, VA: National School Public Relations Association, 1979.

*How To Get Involved in Your Child's Education: A Checklist For Parents*. Jefferson, MO: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri Parent Teachers Association, 1989.

McKinney, Kay. *Parents: Here's How to Make School Visits Work*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Education Research and Improvement.

*Parents' Survival Tips*. Madison, WI: Parents Anonymous, 1985.

*Parent to Parent*. West Bend, WI: West Bend School District, 1987-88.

*Partners In Education*. West Bend, WI: West Bend School District, 1988.

*Plain Talk for Parents*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services.

Sawtelle, Charlotte. *Learning Is a Family Affair: A Guide for Parents of Children in Grades 1-6*. Augusta, ME: Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services, 1984.

Schmid, Deborah. *Time For You. Time For Your Child*. Burlington, WI: 1988.

*Success Steps*. Kenosha, WI: Kenosha Unified School District.

*Supporting Young Adolescents: A Guide to Leading Parent Meetings*. Granville, OH: Quest International, 1987.

*What Students Need to Know*. New York: National Urban League, 1989.

Williams, Jane L. *Discipline That Works*. West Haven, CT: National Education Association, Pamphlet No. 5156-4-00, 1987.

*You Are Invited: A Parent-Teacher Conference*. Arlington, VA: national School Public Relations Association, 1987.

## Magazines and Newsletters

*Educational Oasis: The Magazine for Middle Grades 5-9*. Carthage, IL: Good Apple, Inc.

*Growing Up: The Parents' Newsletter Sent Home From School With the Student*. Lafayette, IN: Dunn & Hargitt, 1983.

*Network for Public Schools*. Columbia, MA: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

*Whose Kids? . . . Our Kids!* Oconto, WI: Oconto County University Extension.

## Handbooks and Workshop Kits

Faber, Adele and Elaine Mazlish. *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen: Group Workshop Kit*. New York, NY: Negotiation Institute, 1980.

*Get Ready, Get Set/Parent's Role: Parent Handbook*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Education, 1990.

*Parent Involvement Handbook and Implementation Kit*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1984.

*Parent Participation for Effective Schools/How To Help Your Child Learn: A Handbook for Parents*. Phoenix, AR: Arizona Department of Education.

*School Is What We Make It!: National PTA's Parent Involvement Planning Kit*. Chicago, IL: National PTA, 1988.

*Support From the Home Team: Families and School Handbook*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1988

## Organizations and Programs

American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209-9988. Phone: (703) 528-0700.

Arizona Department of Education, 1535 West Jefferson Street, Phoenix, AZ 85007. Phone: (602) 255-5008.

Center of Education for the Young Adolescent, 128 Doudna Hall, 1 University Plaza, Platteville, WI 53818-3099. Phone: (608) 342-1276.

Educational Resources Information Center, Office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20208-5720. Phone: (800) USE-ERIC.

Families in Education, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, PO Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841. Phone: (608) 266-9757.

Family Resource Coalition, 230 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1625, Chicago, IL 60601. Phone: (312) 726-4750.

Florida Department of Education, Office of Policy Research and Improvement, 325 West Gaines Street, Room 414, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400. Phone: (904) 488-1611.

Home and School Institute, Special Projects Office, 1201 Sixteenth Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Phone: (202) 466-3633.

Indiana Department of Education, Center for School Improvement and Performance, Office of School Assistance, Room 229, State House, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798. Phone: (317) 232-6610.

Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services, State House Station 23, August, ME 04333. Phone: (207) 289-5800.

Massachusetts Department of Education, Office of Community Education, 1385 Hancock Street, Quincy, MA 02169. Phone: (617) 770-7502.

Minnesota Department of Education, Parent/Community Involvement, Capitol Square, 550 Cedar Street, Saint Paul, MN 55101. Phone: (612) 296-6104.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, PO Box 480, Jefferson, MO 65102. Phone: (314) 751-3469.

National Committee for Citizens in Education, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301, Columbia, MA 21044. Phone: (301) 997-9300.

National Education Association, Washington, DC 20036-3290. Phone: (202) 833-4000.

National PTA, 700 North Rush Street, Chicago, IL 60611-2571. Phone: (312) 787-0977.

National School Public Relations Association, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209. Phone: (703) 528-5840.

National Urban League, 500 East 62nd Street, New York, NY 10021. Phone: (212) 310-9000.

Negotiation Institute, 230 Park Avenue, Suite 460, New York, NY 10169. Phone: (212) 986-5555.

Ohio Department of Education, Educational, Educational Services, 65 South Front Street, Room 719, Columbus, OH 43266-4590. Phone: (614) 466-4590.

The Parent Institute, PO Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. Phone: (703) 569-9842.

Parents Anonymous, Wisconsin Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 214 N. Hamilton Street, Madison, WI 53703. Phone: (608) 256-3374.

Partners in Education, 1213 North 12th Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095. Phone: (414) 334-3778.

Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333. Phone: (717) 783-9802.

Quest International, 537 Jones Road, PO Box 566, Granville, OH 43023-0566. Phone: (800) 446-2700; in Ohio, (800) 233-7900.

University of Wisconsin – Extension, Family Living Education, 637 Extension Building, Madison, WI 53706. Phone: (608) 263-1095.

Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Community Services, Office for Children, Youth, and Families, 1 West Wilson Street, PO Box 7851, Madison, WI 53707. Phone: (608) 266-3036.